



MenSI

Mentoring for
School Improvement

D3.2

Teacher community and support infrastructure

V. 12 May 2021



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Introduction

The purpose of the D3.2 Teacher community and support infrastructure is to offer “a report of the school support mechanisms that have been implemented” and it is due in the month 6 of the project (April 2021).

At this stage of the project (April 2021) the school selection process is ongoing in the partner countries (BE, CZ, HR, IT, HU, PT) and the D3.1 “Mentoring Operations Manual” is being prepared.

The present deliverable aims to describe what are the **foreseen support mechanism and community building elements** targeting the participant schools both at the **central level** (steered by EUN) and at the **national level** (by the national partners). The overall objective of the support activities is to engage participants in the project, offer them professional development opportunities, support exchange of practice and networking both at national and international levels, and help teachers to reach their objectives within the project.

MenSI schools

As part of the WP3 “Mentoring Network Building and Support” the MenSI partners are currently carrying out the selection of the participant schools. Based on jointly drafted and agreed school criteria, the partners organise the selection process independently in the 6 MenSI pilot countries (BE, CZ, HR, HU, IT, PT). This will result in a total of **24 mentor schools and 96 mentee schools** which will work in clusters, each composed of 1 mentor school working with 4 mentee schools. Each country has 4 clusters.

National coordinators

In the very beginning of the project, each of the MenSI partners nominated a **national coordinator**. The national coordinators are the ones to provide the MenSI schools with the first-line support using tools, platforms and communities that partner organisation already has in place for school collaboration and peer exchange, but also organising national workshops (online or on-site), meetings, etc. to animate the community of schools.

Central online community

EUN will set up and run the MenSI website which will serve as the project’s central online platform, supporting the partners in community building and obtaining their objectives within the project.

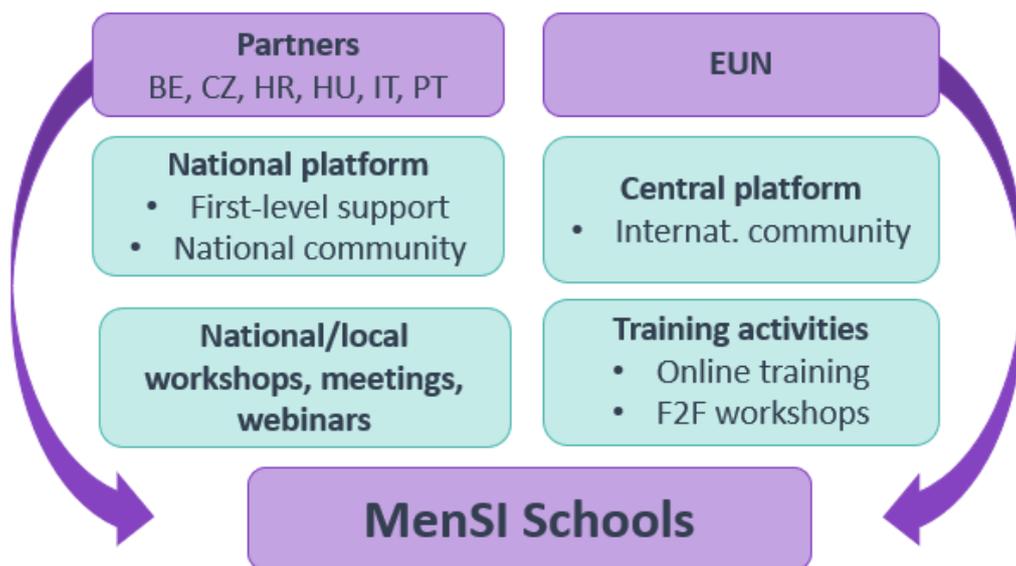


National platform and support activities

The main community building and support activities will take place at national level by each partner using the tools and platforms they already have at their disposal.

Overview

The support infrastructure and teacher community both at central and national level are illustrated in the following graph, showing that the participant schools benefit from both systems which complement each other in terms of activities and support provided.





Centralised support mechanisms

The centralised support mechanisms in the project are coordinated by EUN and consist of three main elements described in this chapter: Central community platform; Online training; and Mentoring workshops.

Central website and community platform

The MenSI website (community platform) will be created as a sub-website of the [FCL platform](#) and it will be available in English, open to all visitors. The website will be launched in month 7 (May 2021).

For the participating schools the website will offer certain interactive features and a place to ‘meet’ among all the MenSI participants from other countries. For other stakeholders and the wider audience (other schools, policy makers) the website will serve as a central place of information about MenSI outputs, resources and activities. The principle is that all (or most) of the website content is available to anyone: this will increase findability of the site in general and its content in Internet search engines. For specific activities users may need to register and login.

The website is of course the public window of the project. It will include general information about the project, news articles, resources, and information on the policy exchange. It supports the promotion and dissemination of the project outcomes and activities.

It is also important to create a sense of community among the website visitors and users who share similar interest. The website also supports schools to demonstrate and share their practice through school diaries. The school diaries can be created and edited only the designated teachers (login to the platform required). Other logged in users can post comments on the diary entries.

The website registration is open to all (using EUN Open login) and certain other interactive features could be offered, such as (as a way of example):

- Surveys / quizzes
- Debate / discussion on policy priority topics
- Live events (e.g. webinars or TeachMeets)
- Partner finding (for new schools interested in mentoring)



In addition, a Facebook group will be created for all the pilot school participants allowing exchange among them and offering a quick communication channel about the project activities and to direct visitors to the website. The Facebook group will first be restricted only for the pilot school participants (year 1) and later on it will open up for the participants of the mentoring MOOC (year 2).

It should be noted that most interaction between the participant schools at national level will take place at the partners' own national platforms/tools.

Online training

At the very beginning of the school year when the pilot is starting, EUN will organise an online training (planned for September 2021). It is foreseen to be a 3-week online training targeted to the mentor school participants. The exact content will be designed and confirmed closer to the training course, but may cover an introduction to the community of practice, use of SELFIE, introduction to mentoring models, etc.

The training will be organised in flexible way including both synchronous (e.g. live events) and asynchronous activities, to allow the participants to find the best time for their participation and progress at their own pace. The estimated time needed for the training is about 6-9 hours (being 2-3 hours per week). The training will be English, and it will be hosted at the [European Schoolnet Academy](#). The participants will be asked to fill in a feedback survey after the training. A report about the training will be submitted one month later.

Mentoring workshops

EUN will organise two on-site workshops (two days each) in its innovative learning space called [Future Classroom Lab](#) in Brussels. Both workshops will include all partner organisations and the content will be co-designed and co-delivered. The content will be designed closer to the workshop dates.

The 1st workshop is planned for October 2021. It is targeted to the mentor schools so that one person per school can participate and planned to take place at the beginning of the school year to provide the participants a good start to the project. The workshop will help the mentoring schools to get prepared, e.g. by instructing about the difference mentoring models and the present the suggested implementation formats.

The 2nd workshop is planned for May 2022. It is targeted again to the mentor schools but also to a representative group of mentee schools. The aim is to exchange on different mentoring practices, discuss the initial findings based on the monitoring and evaluation, and help define requirements for a MenSI MOOC that will be run in autumn 2022 to mainstream project results.



The participants will be asked to fill in a feedback survey after each workshop. After each workshop, a report will be submitted.



Support mechanisms at country level

In this chapter the project partners describe the current support mechanisms and teacher communities that can be applied in MenSI. The final decision will be made closer to the start of the piloting period (September 2021).

Belgium-Flanders

Introduction

Education in Flanders is divided into three networks. The MenSI partner “GO!” (government-provided education) is the second largest network.

Our vision and mission

Respect, openness, equality, honesty, involvement and engagement are core values for educating active citizens.

- Offering high quality education to a wide cultural mix of students.
- Creating pleasant learn and live environments where students learn together with respect and equality.
- Making every student VIP to maximise wellbeing, equal opportunities, aiming to be a pluralistic entity that mirrors broader societal life.
- Opening doors to the world and enabling life-long and life-wide learning.
- Being schools of the future in new learning environments with the latest ICT applications in multi-functional and durable buildings.
- Integrating fully within society, having close connections with the business world, cultural, social and economic players.
- Empowering teachers to be inspiring and ambitious in leading students into realizing their full potential based on individual gifts, interests and learning capacity.

Below is an overview of the number of schools & students (01/02/2015)

Type	Level	Institutions	Students
Compulsary education	Primary mainstream	382	101.913
	Primary Exceptional	34	7189



	Secondary mainstream	213	76522
	Secondary exceptional	21	5249
	Part-time professional	16	2457
Total		666	193330
	Non-compulsary		
	Adult education	27	117083
	Part-time artistic	15	12557
Total		42	129640
	Boarding schools	54	3618

Vision on networking/hubs

Past years we saw an increase in the creation of networks and hubs on various topics. It didn't take long till we started to recognize the added value. Therefore, we invested in participating to various international networks, projects, etc. Networking and hubs are **included** in our new strategic plan. In 2021 it includes a shift from **networking to professional learning environment (PLG)**.

PLG definition

There are many definitions of a PLG that do share some common characteristics. We use the definition below from Verbiest (2016)³. We speak of a professional learning community when the education professionals in a school engage in sustained individual and collaborative learning to improve student education and student outcomes (p. 18). The core of a professional learning community is therefore a group of professionals who individually and above all collectively examine their own practice in a critical-reflective way, with the aim of improving that practice (p. 17).

Why do we rely on PLGs?

As Verbiest's definition indicates, the main goal of a PLG is to improve the learning outcomes of the learner. Other sources also focus on effects at the learner level: better results and increased well-being. In addition to these goals at **student level**, a PLG also aims to achieve results and effects at teacher and school level.

- At the **teacher level**:
 - team members have a stronger belief in their own abilities (perception of effectiveness)
 - team members regard teaching and the improvement of the quality of education in the school as a collective effort and responsibility

³ Professional learning communities. An introduction. 4th edition, 2016. Eric Verbiest, Garant



- team members show a greater capacity to act (develop and apply a stronger pedagogical and didactical mastery)
- At the **school level**:
 - improve teaching and learning practices
 - increases the school's capacity for change

Good education thrives on developing schools as professional learning communities. A striking number of descriptions from the quality expectations and quality images under the headings of Policy and Quality Development in the ROC refer to the characteristics of a professional learning community as described by Verbiest. The government therefore expects schools to develop into professional learning communities or, put differently, "good education thrives on the development of schools as professional learning communities. There is a culture of quality in the school when all team members and the school as an organisation question themselves, safeguard quality and adjust it where necessary.

Current support mechanisms

National communities

All our schools are divided in regions (scholengroepwerking) and work together self-organised.

There are different clusters:

- PLG of innovative schools (bottom-up).
- PLG of specific fields (top-down).
- PLG for learning platforms (bottom-up self-organised).

In recent years we saw an increase in:

- Teacher design teams (driven by content).
- PLG (professional learning communities) (driven by pedagogy).
- There is work on the whole school approach.

National online communities

There are a lot of online communities on various platform in our country.

GO! – GO! has a strong partnership with Smartschool (a local ed tech company). Every pedagogical counsellor has an own online environment for his/her subject, where all teachers of GO! can subscribe on. The clusters divided by regions (scholengroepwerking) also has chosen a platform (e.g. Microsoft Teams, Google, Smartschool, etc.).

External communities – There are a lot of different external online communities organized by companies like (Microsoft For Education, Google Fourcast, D-teach, etc.).



Future plans

Further development and support in PLG's

As stated, we recently started with the transformation from networks to PLG's. Our future plan is to implement this change.

Lessons learned and research on mentoring

We would like to use the lessons learned and results of the research on mentoring from the MenSi project to:

- support our vision and guidelines.
- To support the sustainability and durability of the hubs made in the MenSi-project.
- To support the creation of new hubs.

Czech Republic

National Context

The education system in the Czech Republic is managed by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MŠMT – Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy). The ministry is the central administration body for pre-school and school facilities, primary, secondary schools and universities, research and development area including international cooperation and other relevant fields. DZS is an organization under the Ministry of Education of the Czech Republic that focuses on facilitating international cooperation in education and encouraging individuals and institutions to become involved in international activities. DZS is not only responsible for the Erasmus+ agenda but many others, including European Schoolnet.

When we consider primary and secondary education, in the Czech Republic we can count 5476 schools, approximately 1 400 000 students and 106 000 teachers in total. DZS usually reaches out to the schools through email communication.

Current support mechanisms

National communities

We work intensively with the eTwinning schools' network where we provide various support to them: professional development opportunities, seminars, national and international conferences. The schools with eTwinning School Label may partially function as a "hub" in their region, many teachers act as eTwinning ambassadors and spread the idea of eTwinning schools innovative teaching and project learning. Support by DZS is also provided in Erasmus+ application process, we



administer the grants from the beginning to the end and we provide administrative support to schools in all parts of the process.

National online communities

The usage of platforms across schools varies significantly. There is no online platform that connects all schools, that is why we normally reach schools via e-mail communication, through websites (DZS or eTwinning) and via social media (Facebook, Twitter). When it comes to the MenSI project, we plan to establish a common on-line platform for all schools involved (MS Teams).

Future plans

On-line support

We plan to use e-mail communication as well as MS Teams newly created channel to support the school communities connected to the MenSI activities.

Croatia

National context

Croatian education system is centrally managed by the Ministry of Science and Education. The Ministry provides all the necessary support, professionally, materially and financially, to the system users and stakeholders. Other national public bodies involved in the regulation, development and quality control of the educational sector in Croatia are Teacher Training Agency, Agency for Vocational Education and Training, Agency for Science and Higher Education, Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes, National Centre for External Evaluation of Education and Croatian Academic and Research Network.

Currently there are 1300 schools, 460 000 students, 60 000 teachers in the Croatian education system. The Ministry reaches out to schools through mailing lists and Moodle virtual classrooms.

Current support mechanisms

National communities

Regional Professional Learning Communities of Teachers cater to teachers of specific subjects by organizing workshops, seminars and conferences for teacher professional development both face-2-face and online.

National online communities

Moodle virtual classrooms are used to reach out to all the teachers in Croatia. Schools use different learning management platforms for teaching, but teacher professional development is mostly conducted through Moodle as all the teachers have access to this platform.



Future plans

Online support

We plan to continue using Moodle to reach out to all the teachers involved in the project.

Hungary

National context

In Hungary the Educational Authority operates a network, that consists of 15 regional centres (**Pedagogical Educational Centres**). The centres are primarily responsible for the support of teachers' professional development. In this context, they collect training needs, organise accredited and non-accredited training events and provide consultancy services. They facilitate many activities that aim knowledge sharing between stakeholders and improve the skills of the teachers.

Current support mechanisms

National communities

To allow knowledge transfer between educational institutions, Educational Authority and its regional centres work with so called **basis institutions**. An application is announced regularly to select kindergartens and schools whose professional work is innovative and whose best practices can be adapted by similar institutions. The task of the selected basis institutions is to share their best practices at regional level, and to host workshops, classroom visits, competitions and training events. Regional centres assist the organisation of knowledge transfer events both in and around the basis institutions and they support the participation of the targeted teachers in the events. Basis institutions can also directly support the professional activities of less successful public education institutions.

The **eco-schools** network was originally based on the OECD ENSI initiative. Eco-schools work in Hungary since 2000. The Eco-school label was given to schools by Oktatáskutató és Fejlesztő Intézet (OFI) (since 2020 merged to Oktatási Hivatal). The label has a normal, and a „forever” version. Eco-schools have local, regional and national conferences, accredited teacher trainings (including a head teacher training programme), and regional and national knowledge transfer hubs, called source centers.

There is a complex **talent management network** in place, consisting of National Talent Points (Nemzeti Tehetségpont), Talent Support Councils (Tehetségsegítő Tanács), and Qualified Talent Fostering Schools (Minősített Tehetséggondozó Műhely). Any school can apply for the qualification. One of their goals is to provide special services for educational institutions in close proximity. There are various forms of knowledge transfer in place throughout the network.



There is a professional knowledge exchange community around the **Digital Thematic Week**, an event held every schoolyear, where digital education is promoted. Schools can join and implement lessons with digital focus, preferably project-based or with other active learning methodology. Project plans can be submitted to a competition. There are overlaps between the Digital Thematic Week and the **Code Week** communities.

Tempus Public Foundation operates an **exchange platform** for lesson plans and project plans with digital education focus and gives prizes each year for the best uploads. They also run a popular MOOC each year with the title “The future of learning”, with yearly renewed content.

There are also networks created by for-profit organisations as part of their social responsibility (SCR) programmes. **Microsoft** is active with its MIE innovative teachers’ network, and the leading telecommunication companies, **Vodafone** and **Telenor** have both their own digital education programmes.

National online communities

There are online communities in connection to most of the abovementioned initiatives, Facebook groups are a popular form for this. Besides those, there are active online communities formed around teacher magazine (e.g. Modern Iskola), blog (e.g. Tanárblog), some teacher associations (e.g. OFOE) and also various bottom-up exchange groups on covid online teaching (e.g. Online otthonoktatás).

Future plans

Teams

We would like to set up a Teams shared space, in a similar structure to how it is used by MenSI project partners. This would allow hubs to have their own space (group or channel) where they could share files, use chat function and organize online meetings, (4 spaces), and in addition, there would be a space for all the involved teachers and schools.

Sulinet page

We would like to set up a new static page on the Sulinet website with general information about the project in national language.

Italy

National Context

In Italy there are many school networks because the MoE promote at regional level school networking. They can be based on regional proximity or networking by topic (small and rural schools, Senza Zaino, Scuola all’aperto, Provaci ancora Sam... etc). All of them aim at promoting



innovation within the network and teachers training actions. Two of the many national network that Indire promoted and supported are Avanguardie Educative and Piccole Scuole.

The research (Punie, Bocconi, 2012) and the experience of INDIRE confirms that innovation does not work if it arrives exclusively from above, but – on the contrary – it ‘takes root’ and is not rejected if dynamics of ‘contagion’ are triggered. The strategy underlying Avanguardie Educative is precisely to systematize change among a network of players who, both by leveraging the possibilities offered by scholastic autonomy and by identifying alternative solutions, have already taken the first steps along the tortuous road to innovation. All of which serves to prepare the ground for an innovation model that is effective and sustainable; through a process that begins from experience and ends in a systemic change, by degrees, passages, and the fusion of ideas.

Piccole Scuole Movement was set up to support the permanence of school in geographically disadvantaged territories, to maintain an educational and cultural centre and to fight the phenomenon of depopulation.

Current support mechanisms

National online communities

Both Movements are open to the participation of those schools that know how to identify innovation, make it implementable and break it down so that it is feasible, sustainable and transferable to other situations. They are a constantly growing Community of Practice which increases its quota from year to year.

As for the small and rural school movement it support training actions for teachers of those isolated context that have been enrolled within the movement. The training lab defined as "adults" aim to provide the teachers of the institutes belonging to the Small School Movement with the tools for didactic and organizational improvement in contexts of geographic isolation and small dimensions. The "Training Pact" formula was introduced, namely a document that defines the mutual commitments that bind together the teacher under training, his/her community of membership represented by the Headmaster, and Indire.

As for the AE Movement has embraced more than 1222 institutes between the schools piloting the Ideas (head schools) and participating schools which are trying out one or more of these Ideas. These have been joined by a hub of schools which ensure at a regional level – together with local expert trainers – a complex series of informative, training, dissemination and support activities for the schools of the Movement and the innovation processes.

Within the Movement there are 2 main mentoring roles:

1. Regional huhs
2. Idea mentors

The selection criteria for “Regional hubs” schools is an open public call, against specific features, such as

- Networking skills



- Innovative organizational practice
- Innovative teaching/learning practices
- Use of digital tools/technologies

A commission examines the candidates and selects the Regional hubs for dissemination activities.

The selection criteria for Idea mentors is based on INDIRE researchers' onsite visits carrying out a specific protocol for the visits, made up of:

- classroom observation
- desk analysis of important documents
- interviews with teachers, school leaders and students (and other crucial stakeholder)
- focus groups with teachers, school leaders and students (and other crucial stakeholder)
- school visit.

AE main content for mentoring deals with “rethinking the school model in term of Space, Time and teaching practices, so that it can respond to the needs of a knowledge-based society”. Conversely the training content among teachers of the small and rural schools deals with teaching practices that service learning, spaced learning, digital didactic content and heuristic dialogue. Both projects have website, with plenty of information material, live webinars.

- social media (twitter and Facebook pages)
- presence of Indire researchers in many boards, training courses

Future plans

In order to maximize the impact in the Mensi Community we are selecting Mentor and Mentee schools among both Movements in order to bring their experiences within the Mensi community.

Portugal

National Context

In Portugal, DGE has a wide range of ways of communicating with the national educational community. From educational magazines, to websites, both institutional and by departments, to Learning Management Systems (e.g. Moodle), Facebook and Twitter platforms, the form of communication is vast. There is a historical widespread habit of publishing all activities in which DGE is involved.

Current support mechanisms

National communities

DGE's national networks are mostly of a more online nature. However, DGE has a history of personally accompanying schools, either through individual reflection meetings, participation in



events promoted by schools, or through events promoted by municipal authorities, or by Inter Municipal Communities.

There are quarterly network meetings on Curricular Autonomy and Flexibility (AFC) where practices are shared between all schools in the country. Information can be found here. <https://afc.dge.mec.pt/pt>

There is also a network of Priority Intervention Territories (TEIP), which meet 3 times a year.

Regional teams have been set up to support and monitor implementation the Curricular Autonomy and Flexibility (AFC) in each of Portugal's five geographical areas – the North, Centre, Lisbon and outskirts, Alentejo, and Algarve. Four government agencies collaborate within the regional teams: The National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training (ANQEP), the Directorate for Schools (DGEsTE), the General Directorate for Education (DGE) and the General Inspectorate for Education and Science (IGEC). Regional teams support schools in different ways. These include: answering any queries schools may have, visiting participating schools, encouraging schools and teachers to participate in regional meetings, and promoting learning between teachers in local networks. The regional teams across geographical areas use the same model to support participating schools in their regions. In addition, they meet regularly to exchange experiences and learn from each other.

There are many dynamics of networks and micro networks promoted by the Training Centers of the Association of Schools (CFAE), which accompany and train teachers. There are 91 CFAE, therefore 91 Micro Networks. These CFAE have dynamics to share practices and pedagogical issues.

Thus, we can say that Portugal is constantly in interaction through networks and thematic micro-networks, where the sharing of practices and contact with specialists from universities on the different themes of the political agenda is fostered:

- Curricular integration
- Methodologies
- Formative assessment
- Pedagogical differentiation and promotion of inclusive education

National online communities

Description of current online teacher/school platforms.

As far as national online communities are concerned, the first and most important is the [DGE institutional website](#), which is made up of the various departments that make it up.

MenSI is delivered by the **Educational Resources and Technologies Team** that coordinates it, as well as to the **Curriculum Development Monitoring Team**, and will have the [national support website](#). It will be here that all the information related to the MenSI project will be placed.



There is also a Moodle platform, where the Practical Community will be hosted, which will also be created very soon. [The platform](#) is national and is a reference at national level.

There will also be a Facebook Group, first closed to Schools, as it is a form with a good record of participation in Portugal, and probably Twitter.

We will also have the promotion of Webinars on the various topics that will be addressed throughout the project. [The website](#) already has a lot of information regarding many themes that will be addressed throughout the MenSI project.

Future plans

The project schools, mentor and mentee, will be closely monitored throughout the project by the National Coordinator and the involved team. These contacts will preferably be made with the management teams and coordinators of each school involved, in order to support all activities related to the project. Help in the implementation of the project, help in choosing topics, help in choosing experts, collaborative work with the teams that are on the ground, will be activities that the National Coordination will promote throughout the project.

Creation of small local and national communities and the incentive to participate in the community of practice, will be other tasks that the Coordination will do. Promoting contact between the schools involved at national level and the European schools involved will be another task that will be carried out. Facilitating all project information and promoting quick informal contacts whenever necessary will also be done. We intend to monitor the proximity of all involved throughout the project.

Coordinator



Partners



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