



MenSI

Mentoring for
School Improvement

D4.1 Report on Regional Hub Mentoring Approaches

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Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Previous research and projects.....	6
Living Schools Lab (2012-2014)	6
European Schoolnet Academy.....	6
Future Classroom Lab	7
Top-down regional hubs	8
Belgium (Flanders).....	10
Croatia	10
Czech Republic.....	11
Hungary	12
Italy	12
Portugal	13
Online mentoring	14
Incentives and rewards	16
Conclusion.....	18



Introduction

The deliverable D4.1 is the MenSI project's overview of regional hub mentoring models and the incentives and rewards scheme for the participating mentor schools. The document assumes that the reader is familiar with the MenSI project, its core activities and objectives. If not, relevant information can be found at the MenSI website³.

Within the MenSI project during the academic year 2021-2022, 24 mentor schools and 96 mentee schools from the six project countries experimented with a variety of whole-school mentoring approaches, both top-down and bottom-up.

The main focus for all the participating countries was to support the mainstreaming of innovative digital teaching practices in primary and secondary schools and to promote innovative use of ICT more generally across the whole school. In addition, each partner country aimed to further experiment and address specific policy or curriculum challenges at a national level that had been identified by the ministry partners and highlighted in the open call for schools. The national priorities included:

- Flexible learning spaces,
- Small/rural schools,
- Personalization of learning,
- Uptake of STEM and robotics,
- Socially disadvantaged students.

The project also focused on exploring new approaches to online mentoring and the use of digital technologies for this purpose. It needs to be emphasised that due to the COVID-19 pandemic measures in force in all the project countries, the project's anticipated plans for how the clusters would operate were significantly impacted by the national responses to the pandemic. For example, there were fewer opportunities for face-to-face meetings and workshops, school visits and classroom observations, which resulted in schools relying more on online opportunities for professional learning, mentoring, exchanges and support. More information on how online mentoring was implemented can be found in the section Online mentoring (p. 15) and in the D.4.2 report.

A specific task was dedicated to exploring the potential impact of different incentive and reward schemes for mentor schools along with the factors that motivate mentee schools to participate in

³ <https://mensi.eun.org/>



the project school clusters. Ministries of Education (MoE) in the partner countries provided the 24 mentor schools with a range of different incentives in recognition of the considerable amount of work and degree of commitment that they made as mentors. Particular attention was given to identifying scalable funding modalities and incentives as well as to exploring different types of incentives and rewards to encourage mentor schools to mainstream their innovative practices and to motivate mentee schools to participate in school-to-school mentoring.

National coordinators were appointed in each country to help build and facilitate the network and to support schools as they explored different whole-school mentoring approaches. National coordinators used tools, platforms and communities that MoE had already had in place for school collaboration and peer exchange. Besides, national coordinators invited experts in different fields according to national priorities and organized expert webinars or workshops for all the participating schools.



Previous research and projects

In line with project requirement to “build on and involve existing networks, ‘multiplier’ structures and regional hubs to mainstream change”, the MenSI project leveraged results from the two-year Living Schools Lab project and EUN’s on-going European Schoolnet Academy and Future Classroom Lab initiatives.

Living Schools Lab (2012-2014)

The Living Schools Lab⁴ (LSL) project promoted a whole-school approach to ICT use, scaling up best practices in the use of ICT between schools with various levels of technological proficiency. The participating teachers and schools were supported through peer-exchanges led by Advanced Schools acting as regional hubs and working collaboratively on a number of themes, and a variety of opportunities for teachers’ on-going professional development. In total, 24 advanced schools and 96 less advanced exchanged best practice and developed a whole school approach involving all levels of school governance to implementing ICT. Although the “regional hub” mentoring strategy developed in the LSL project was well received by the 12 participating ministries, it proved difficult in most countries to mainstream this approach once project funding ended. The MenSI project built upon the findings of the LSL and further developed the “regional hub” mentoring strategy that was successfully piloted by ministries in the LSL project.

European Schoolnet Academy

In 2014, EUN and its ministries launched the independently funded European Schoolnet Academy⁵ in response to the need to scale up professional development opportunities for teachers. Since then, the Academy has been offering an annual programme of massive open online courses (MOOCs) to teachers, school leaders and ICT advisers in Europe (over 165,000 enrolments in its courses to date) which are entirely free of charge and open for anyone.

⁴ Living Schools Lab, Coordination and support action 317587, 7th Framework Programme, <http://sl.eun.org>

⁵ <https://www.europeanschoolnetacademy.eu>



Future Classroom Lab

Created by EUN, the Future Classroom Lab⁶ (FCL) is an inspirational learning environment in Brussels, challenging visitors to rethink the role of pedagogy, technology and design in their classrooms. Through six learning zones, visitors can explore the essential elements in delivering 21st century learning: students' and teachers' skills and roles, learning styles, learning space design, current and emerging technology. Since the opening of the Future Classroom Lab in January 2012, European Schoolnet and its supporting Ministries of Education have also worked closely with a growing number of ICT providers to ensure an independently funded and sustainable platform.

⁶ <http://fcl.eun.org>



Top-down regional hubs

The Framework for Mainstreaming Change⁷ developed in the LSL project provided mentor schools with a regional hub model and a considerable degree of top-down support. However, while this proved effective within the parameters of an EC-funded project, it may potentially have inhibited the subsequent mainstreaming of the LSL mentoring model at national level. In order to address this concern, the MenSI project experimented with a bottom-up mentoring approach in some school clusters, at least one per country. Bottom-up school clusters were self-organised and self-managed to a much greater degree than the school clusters involved in a top-down regional hub mentoring model. The bottom-up approach is described in further detail in the Deliverable 4.2.

The MenSI proposal aimed at involving some schools in MenSI that had been inspired to set up a Future Classroom Lab (FCL). By so doing, the project would be better able to understand what has motivated these schools to set up their own learning labs and to see whether some incentives/rewards/support could help them to provide mentoring to other schools. As part of WP4, the Consortium proposed for a number of these learning labs to be invited to work with MenSI school clusters and/or schools within other EU countries in order to accelerate the adoption of the FCL model and the innovative pedagogical practices involving ICT available in these labs.

In this regard, participation of schools from the growing network of learning labs that have been inspired by European Schoolnet's (EUN) FCL was encouraged wherever there were opportunities to do so. Schools from the FCL network were invited to work with MenSI school clusters and share good practice on a national level, as these predominantly 'bottom-up' initiatives have been instrumental in helping the schools concerned to develop an innovative whole-school approach to implementing ICT. The involved learning labs helped school clusters to accelerate the adoption of the FCL model and the innovative pedagogical practices involving ICT that are available in these labs.

In bottom-up clusters, there was no formal requirement for mentor schools to produce an operational plan and timetable, but schools were free to decide themselves to do this. Some degree of support and steering was required from each national MoE coordinator, particularly early on, in order to help mentor schools establish a cluster with their mentee schools. Generally, though, after the cluster had been established, national coordinators were supposed to be less proactive than in the clusters that adopted the top-down regional hub model and exercised a 'light touch' approach when providing support. However, regardless of the approach, all mentor schools were required to

⁷ [A Whole School Approach To Technology Supported Change](#), LSL, 2014



work with the mentee schools to produce a diary/report that outlined the mentoring work carried out and lessons learned.

Each partner ministry organised at both national and local level face-to-face and online meetings and workshops for their participating schools at the beginning, during and at the end of the whole-school mentoring experimentation in schools. The frequency and scale of these meetings was decided upon by each national coordinator as well as by regional hub school coordinators. A blended model of training proved to be the most widely used and beneficial for teachers. Using the online education model (virtual classrooms) ensured equity, equal quality and inclusive access to the professional development opportunities. In this way, all participants were provided with the highest quality content and lecturers without any geographical or professional discrimination.

At the beginning of the mentoring experimentation phase, an online MOOC and an online workshop were organised for all mentor school coordinators and teachers from mentor schools as preparation for their mentoring activities.

Towards the end of the mentoring period, an online workshop was organised for a mix of 24 mentor and a representative group of mentee schools in order to exchange on the different mentoring practices, discuss how the school clusters had been operating and help define requirements for a publicly available MOOC to be run at the end of the mentoring period in order to mainstream the project results.

Each of the mentor schools and the mentee schools they worked with received advice and support from the MoE national coordinator, whereas the mentor and mentee schools that pursued the bottom-up mentoring approach were more independent in deciding on the activities and topics through school-to-school peer learning.

However, each of the mentor schools, regardless of the approach they adopted, had a degree of flexibility in terms of how it chose to work with and mentor its cluster of mentee schools in line with the school's ICT implementation strategy. They identified and analysed the effectiveness and affordability of the top-down mentoring model that supported whole-school take-up of a broad range of innovative ICT practices that fit the schools in their cluster.

The process of mentoring involved a mixture of face-to-face workshops and school visits, especially in areas where schools in the cluster were geographically closer to each other, as well as varying levels of online support, depending on to what extent schools in the cluster were geographically dispersed. Peer-to-peer exchanges between subject teachers were carried out in all clusters, and so were workshops, webinars, expert visits and Teachmeets. Mentor schools worked with the mentee schools to produce a cluster diary that outlined the mentoring work carried out in the cluster and lessons learned.

All school clusters were invited to explore new tools that are available to schools in Europe, such as SELFIE (Self-reflection on Effective Learning by Fostering the use of Innovative Educational



Technologies) which was used by all the schools to determine schools' digital strengths and weaknesses and identify areas for development.

The role of the national coordinators was more prominent in top-down regional hub mentoring model in all the six project countries as the experimentation phase started. However, along the way, as the mentor schools became more familiar with the mentee schools they worked with, learned about their needs and interests and became more independent in making decisions, the role of national coordinators changed; they became less directive and acted more as “a guide on the side”. Mentoring practice involving top-down regional hubs models also varied from country to country.

Belgium (Flanders)

In Belgium, schools were divided in regional groups by educational level – primary and secondary schools. This was a “natural” environment, especially since schools in Belgium often form groups based on the type of school and age of students. These natural hubs proved to be more productive because teachers were familiar with the curriculum as well as teaching methodologies and they could easily relate to and implement new ideas in their classrooms.

The clusters that had the same goals had less difficulties in organizing their work and deciding on the main elements of what they wanted to learn. They would be less goal oriented in clusters formed with different types of schools.

Mentor schools took the lead, developed their own mentoring manual and shared good practice in meetings within their mentee schools. They focused on ways to bring personalized learning to each classroom, how to use Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) methodology in schools and level-up their mentoring and networking practices. One of the important parts of the cluster meetings was reflecting on the work done in mentee schools and the progress they had made in between the meetings. This type of reflection helped schools make informed decisions and plans for the next steps to be taken in their cluster with regard to the specific needs of each of the mentee schools.

The national coordinator was available to all schools whenever they need help or advice, which proved to be more frequent at the beginning of the project. Schools were provided with support as well as with access to access to relevant literature, materials and tools.

Croatia

In Croatia, the schools were split into clusters based on their geographical proximity to make it easier for the schools to meet face-to-face. Unfortunately, it was not possible to guarantee the proximity for all schools as some were rather considerably geographically dispersed. The mentor schools selected in the call were advanced schools in the field of technology and pedagogical innovation. Two of the mentor schools that had already shown considerable initiative in pursuing a



bottom-up approach to innovation. They were duly selected to mentor clusters that would be more autonomous and independent with the aim that these clusters would more easily adapt a bottom-up approach to whole-school mentoring. The other two mentor schools were assigned to leading top-down regional clusters.

At the beginning of the experimentation phase the top-down cluster coordinators relied to a much higher degree than the bottom-up cluster on the support and help of the national coordinator who was at their disposal whenever they needed advice or support. The bottom-up cluster coordinators by comparison relied more heavily on their school teams as well as collaboration with the mentee school coordinators. However, after the initial meetings, the top-down clusters expressed the need to have a higher degree of autonomy and started to independently organize the activities in their cluster and continued to do so until the very end of the experimentation phase. It needs to be noted that all the schools selected in the project had full support of their headteachers, and this was one of the crucial elements that contributed to their autonomy.

Another important factor that prevailed in all the school clusters was that mentor and mentee schools in all the four clusters worked closely together and made all the decisions about their work together. For example, in one of the school clusters the five coordinators held monthly meetings throughout the school year, where they reflected on their work and jointly decided on the next steps.

Cluster diaries were produced to document the mentoring and the learning process by all mentee schools. One cluster diary per school was developed in the first term and the other during the second term. Interactive posters, poster presentations and posters were produced to present the overall learning and work throughout the year in the cluster. In Croatia, altogether 27 cluster diaries, 10 posters and 2 videos were prepared by 16 mentee schools, whereas mentor schools created 6 videos to describe their experience as a mentor school.

Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic, the success of regional hubs very much depended on the hub itself and the way they approached and took control of mentoring. It was discovered that schools needed a clear structure that explained how to approach whole-school mentoring, what types of strategies and techniques to use, and how to implement and adjust activities in their classroom. This structure needed to be provided by the national coordinators or project coordinator.

For mentor schools it was very important to have the opportunity to meet with other mentor schools to share experience not only regionally but also internationally. Face-to-face meetings proved to be much better accepted than online workshops and webinars. Some of the mentor school coordinators reported on hesitancy of the mentee schools to join online calls, webinars and online seminars. They were battling with low attendance and with the lack of motivation of the teachers in online meetings as many teachers suffered from burnouts and online fatigue due to the



long-term COVID measures and many of them were failing to see the benefits which could be fixed by or would not happen if there were more face-to-face meetings.

In other school clusters there were good examples of combining blended mentoring approaches. The teachers were more willing to participate and saw the added value of the project even though face-to-face visits were cancelled due to the pandemic. Mentor schools kept providing support and advice for their mentee schools in different forms, such as tutorials for implementing different applications in the teaching process. They intend to keep doing so even after the project is over as they aim to invite the mentee schools to visit and directly observe lessons. Within the MenSI project, one of the mentor schools developed two didactic aids⁸ to help the mentor schools to form a connection with those who are not yet convinced of the value and benefits of ICT activities. These aids develop students' computational thinking, orientation in space and prepare them for programming in digital tools such as Scratch. They are suitable for elementary school students regardless of age, as their difficulty can be adjusted according to the teacher's needs.

Hungary

In Hungary, the hubs were not really regional because of the considerable distance between schools. Instead, it was decided to have one school in each county to help spread the MenSI project all over the country. The advantages of this approach were that there was no preliminary opinion about schools in terms of how advanced a school was. This helped teachers in a cluster to connect with each other and develop an understanding. They were curious to learn more about the work of other schools, the context and the environment their peers teach in and were eager to learn how they practice and embed innovation. It was a good starting point for all the teachers.

One of the biggest drawbacks was logistics, because it was rather complicated to organize face-to-face meetings due to geographical distance. It meant that teachers needed a full day to spend on a school visit and travelling. Because of this unavoidable requirement, schools decided to keep the meetings online on a regular basis. Another difficult element for schools in Hungary that prevented them from organizing face-to-face meetings was the complicated administration processes required in order to arrange school visits and travel. In Hungary, therefore, there are no plans to ask schools to keep on collaborating in regional hubs; instead, the aim is to apply the lessons learned and the MenSI mentoring approach in other existing school networks.

Italy

Lessons learned in Italy focus mainly on the need to give control to school coordinators and teachers. The national coordinator stepped back as much as possible, but they were always there in case teachers had questions or doubts. For instance, when mentor schools wanted to organize

⁸ [Teaching aids for Czech MenSI schools](#), MenSI blog post by Lucie Novakova, 2022



activities both online and face-to-face, the national coordinator would let them take the lead and organize the event, providing them with suggestions or event structure, which schools were free to modify or adapt to their needs. The national coordinator visited school clusters on a regular basis, which was very useful for the schools as it enabled teachers to ask for and receive advice and recommendations about topics they struggled with. Teachers used these visits to actively participate in discussions about the use of a particular educational tool or an innovative teaching method and how it could be implemented by teachers of different subjects.

Another important finding after the experimentation phase was that both the mentor and mentee schools needed to have a shared and clear vision of where they wanted to go, what they wanted to achieve, what areas they needed to work on and what aspects of innovation practices they wanted to implement in their schools. Concrete actions needed to be taken in schools. Otherwise, it would be unclear and not easy to understand the process of mentoring and participate in it. For example, it was important to allow teachers to work together at the same time, so the scheduling of the lessons was changed to allow the teachers to co-work and collaborate.

Portugal

The communication between the national coordinator and the four school leaders of the mentor schools proved to be the key to the successful implementation of the MenSI project in Portugal. In order to provide just in time support and advice to the school leaders, the national coordinator launched a WhatsApp group for this purpose.

Regional hubs successfully organised different types of activities, both online and face-to-face. Teachers preferred face to face meetings because they could try out some activities and learn by doing which was more difficult to perform in an online environment, such as the robotics class that mentee school teachers observed in one of the mentor schools. After observing the lesson, the teachers actively participated in the programming session and learned how to program robots. They could see in practice why programming and computational thinking are skills that all students need to acquire.



Online mentoring

Teachers in all schools reported that they had no problems with organizing different types of online events. The ability of schools to organise online mentoring and support was undoubtedly enhanced as a result of measures taken in all countries in response to the Covid pandemic, which equipped teachers with greater knowledge and experience in organizing online events for their students and parents. Generally, MenSI schools managed the move well to greater use of online tools and platforms for mentoring coordination and support. The clusters experimented with different formats that were most suitable for mentoring teachers, such as workshops with breakout rooms, lectures, webinars with invited experts and Teachmeets which gave the presentation floor to the teachers from mentor and mentee schools. In Belgium, they also had some meetings with industry partners, such as educational software and hardware providers.

Online mentoring also proved to be more cost effective as more teachers were able to participate. All the events were recorded so that teachers could watch the recordings at their own pace at a later time when it suited them best. In Croatia, throughout the experimentation year, the four clusters organized 28 online activities and one hybrid event. At the same time, they organized 14 face-to-face meetings, mostly in the format of workshops, but also as class visitations and lesson observations.

The drawbacks of online mentoring included online fatigue and excessive screen time due to the long-term pandemic measures which had been in force in all the partner countries since 2020. Online meetings were less personal and at times it was very difficult for teachers to connect and bond with their peers in an online setting. Certain pedagogical formats, such as class observations or job shadowing could not be performed online, as schools did not own adequate equipment that allowed for remote observations of classroom practice.

An additional problem experienced by the teachers was the use of different learning management systems (LMS) by each school, so they had to learn about the new system and get used to it to work and share with their peers. The clusters where the same LMS was used across all schools proved that having a mutual space was very useful for all the teachers, not only in terms of having a place where teachers could go and ask for advice, counselling or an intervention, share their learning and plan and discuss future steps, but also where they felt less isolated and alone.

Lack of time was another issue that teachers in all countries experienced. They reported that a considerable amount of time and effort needed to be invested in online activities and this often resulted in having less time for structural innovation, improvement and collaboration between schools.



In Hungary, some clusters worked very efficiently in online surroundings without any organized face-to-face meetings; however, all the teachers agreed that it was face-to-face meetings that could more effectively establish and sustain personal relationships and enhance informal exchanges between peers. There was a general consensus within both mentor and mentee participating schools that online mentoring cannot replace face-to-face meetings, both at national and international levels.

There are benefits and drawbacks to both online and face-to-face mentoring as experienced by the MenSI schools:

Table 1: Benefits & drawbacks to online and F2F mentoring

Online mentoring		Face-to-face mentoring	
Pros	Cons	Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Equal quality for all - Cost-effective - Recordings can be watched at a later time and at own pace - Comfort of learning from home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sense of isolation - Online fatigue - Burnout due to long-term online teaching - Excessive screen time - Limited pedagogical formats of mentoring activities available - Difficult to connect and bond with peers - Less personal - Low attendance - Lack of motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Easier to establish and sustain personal relationships - Different pedagogical formats of mentoring activities available, including job shadowing and classroom observation - More opportunities for interaction between teachers - Learning by doing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expensive - Time-consuming, especially in geographically dispersed clusters - Complicated administration processes to organize face-to-face meetings

A blend of face-to-face and online events seems to be the best solution for effective whole-school mentoring. If combined, they can bring good results and success to schools.



Incentives and rewards

During the project, MenSI partners working with school clusters experimented with a variety of different ways to incentivise or reward schools. It had not been possible in the earlier LSL project to undertake this sort of experimentation, particularly in order to come to a better understanding of how different types of incentives and rewards had the potential to motivate mentor schools and sustain their commitment to demonstrating and sharing their innovative practice. Two types of incentives were introduced at the beginning of the project: cash and non-cash incentives.

Cash incentives were tested during the project to determine to what extent they enabled mentor (as opposed to mentee) schools to see a tangible return on their additional workload. At the beginning of the project all mentor schools received a cash incentive of 4.000 Euros to fund different activities in their cluster. Mentee schools received non-cash incentives in terms of paid transport, catering, recognition or training opportunities. In Hungary, however, a hybrid approach was explored as the MoE decided that instead of only mentor schools receiving cash incentives, both mentor and mentee schools should receive financial incentives for their participation. By doing so, the MoE added the “ethical dimension” to the project, in the sense that all participating schools were financially rewarded for the work they performed during the project.

No financial reporting was expected from the schools related to the provided cash incentives (e.g., receipts, invoices) as it was the primary aim to recognize and reward each school for their “service”. Nevertheless, in some countries (Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary) it proved especially difficult (including for legal reasons) to give schools additional cash incentives, even when the funding was linked more specifically to software purchases or video production. The other three project countries were more flexible in this regard.

Mentor schools used the money they received from the MoE to organize face-to-face workshops, mainly one at the beginning, the other at the end of the school year and school visitations in mentee schools. Mentor schools also invited digital innovation experts to deliver workshops and webinars and some of them used the allocated funds to buy subscriptions to digital tools and teaching resources they needed in their work.

Project funding was also used for the organization of a variety of non-cash incentives to include all the participating teachers in both mentor and mentee schools. These included:

- **New learning opportunities:**
 - invitations to participate in face-to-face and online CPD training;
 - participation in a 3-week training MOOC on EUN Academy;
 - access to digital products (equipment, software, service etc.);
 - opportunities to visit other schools;
 - time off teaching to take part in mentoring activities.



- **Participation in the MenSI national and international school community:**
 - opportunity and enjoyment to network with national and international peers;
 - national and international sharing, discussing, spreading and adopting of innovative practices;
 - delivery of presentations and talks at Teachmeets, national conferences and other face-to-face events;
 - featured blog posts on the Community website;
 - contributing to project's outputs, such as MOOCs;
- **Recognition and prestige at national and international level:**
 - change/upgrade of teachers' job title;
 - career advancement;
 - application for the best teachers and/or monetary rewards (e.g., Regulations on Rewarding Teachers, Professional Associates and Principals in Croatia);
 - media coverage of the school and its achievement in mentoring.

Due to the pandemic, no face-to-face meetings were organized at an international level, but the teachers could share their innovative practice in online workshops.

Another well-received opportunity for teachers was to contribute to the project MOOC Beyond networking on the EUN Academy. Excellent contributions in the forms of videos were received from mentor schools about whole-school mentoring models, the results they achieved during the process as well as the challenges and obstacles they encountered and how they managed to overcome them. Schools seized the opportunity to gain recognition for their innovative work by sharing these videos which represent a very useful repository of good practice and examples of the implementation of whole-school mentoring from European schools.

Recognition was certainly one of the crucial elements for teachers and schools alike. For their work teachers were recognized at a national level in terms of career advancement or applying and receiving teaching awards, e.g., the Croatian Teacher of the Year Award. Recognition was also important at the school level as their achievements were covered by the media which helped them increase their school's visibility and get the attention they deserved beyond the school walls.



Conclusion

Top-down regional hubs in MenSI have extended the earlier work in the LSL project and created a successful model for promoting innovation and mainstreaming innovative use of digital technologies in the classrooms. By working in clusters which served as small communities of practice, teachers were able to get to know their peers, connect and share their experiences, materials, projects and examples of best practice in a local language, without any language barriers. This idea of connectedness on a regional level, despite the “region” often including schools that were geographically dispersed, contributed to the motivation of teachers and their willingness to experiment with new teaching ideas and to implement and adapt innovative practice shared by their peers. School visits were reported to further boost inspiration as teachers were able to see how a certain teaching method could be applied in different subjects and on various school levels, which enhanced the interdisciplinary approach to teaching.

The success of the regional hubs can also be linked to the flexibility of mentor schools in the process of whole-school mentoring; it was important to the success of the project that they were able to adapt the mentoring model to fit with the interests and evolving needs of the mentee schools in their cluster. As the project progressed, this also resulted in the national coordinators having a less critical, role; as the mentor schools gained in confidence, the role of national coordinators was rather to support, help and provide advice just in time.

It is important to emphasize that the MenSI project envisaged a co-learning, community building mentoring approach in which both mentor and mentee schools had lessons to learn from each other, especially after the period of online teaching during the pandemic when all the teachers were required to use some kind of digital technology to teach and connect with their students. The majority of the mentor schools were aware of this and were fully supportive of the desire of mentee schools to show and share their knowledge and experience and regarded this an opportunity to learn themselves. The knowledge and experience of mentee schools were appreciated and leveraged by their mentor schools to organize activities. In fact, if there was a “thin line” between a mentor and a mentee school and if there was confidence, humbleness and open-mindedness between mentor and mentee schools, the clusters were more successful than in clusters where there was a more black and white power relationship and where a mentor school assumed a leading role. Everybody teaches, everybody learns, was a motto adopted by the successful clusters in all the partner countries. This also led to the inclusion of more teachers in the project; boosted the motivation of project schools; resulted in more immediate implementation of innovative practices; resulted in more interdisciplinary learning in classrooms; and generally produced better overall results.



Even though face-to-face workshops at an international level were planned within the MenSI project, they were not realized due to the pandemic. As part of WP3 activities, two face-to-face workshops had to be organised by EUN targeting mentor school representatives: 1) at the start of the mentoring activities (M11, September 2021) in order to decide on mentoring models that will be piloted and help prepare the 24 mentor schools and; 2) towards the end of the mentoring period (M19, May 2022) for a mix of 24 mentor and a representative group of mentee schools. Both workshops were meant to be organised over two days in the EUN Future Classroom Lab in Brussels.

Following the outcomes of the discussions during the MenSI Steering Committees it was decided to cancel all F2F international gatherings until the pandemic situation would allow it. Given the ongoing uncertainty caused by the pandemic, it was finally agreed by all project partners to host the trainings online and space them in time in order not to overwhelm mentor schools with a high number of online sessions. In this regard, there was no possibility for teachers to meet their international peers, learn from them or share and demonstrate their good practice in face-to-face meetings. Instead, they could engage only in virtual exchanges of practice. Face-to-face events at an international level would be very useful for all teachers. At the time of writing this report a new international exchange meeting has been agreed by the consortium to take place in February 2023 before the end of the project.

Following the project, plans to continue with regional hubs vary across project partners. In Portugal, for example, the MoE has decided to spread and further implement this mentoring model in the form of “mini MenSIs” by encouraging advanced schools to organize themselves in clusters and invite up to four less advanced schools that they would work together with throughout the school year.

In Croatia, the experiences and knowledge gained in the MenSI project will continue through the work of the schools included in the project. The Mentor schools involved in the project have expressed their willingness to continue working with their mentee partners, whereas some of the mentee schools have expressed interest in becoming mentor schools for the schools in their local area and share their learning, knowledge and skills with fellow colleagues from local schools.

The Czech National Agency for International Education and Research intends to build on the good relationship with mentor schools and, with their support, to spread awareness of MenSI by organizing workshops, seminars and conferences focused on mentoring and digital technologies.

In Belgium, the pedagogical guidance service of GO! Education consciously chooses to focus on developing professional learning communities beyond the MenSI school clusters. The focus hereby is that schools learn from each other.

While the Hungarian Educational Authority does not plan to expand the network that was set up in the MenSI project, the aim will be to enrich other already established networks with the methods that were tested in the MenSI project. All the MenSI schools are part of the bigger network of Basis Schools, where the aim is to share best practice. Another important network is the Eco-schools. Both networks can benefit from the final results and lessons learnt of the MenSI.



In Italy, the advanced cluster schools involved in the MenSI activities, expressed their interest in trying to further consolidate the lessons learned in the project and in scaling up MenSI mentoring approaches within the entire school teams in each school. This is the reason why Indire has planned one more year of activities among mentor and mentee schools that includes financing further training activities, plus school visits and dissemination within the framework of a new agreement between Indire and the cluster schools.

More information on future plans and exploitation activities of the MenSI project outcomes is provided in the D. 6.7. report Final Exploitation Plan.⁹

⁹ [Final Exploitation Plan](#), 2022

Coordinator



Partners



EDUCAÇÃO



#MenSI-schools

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