

Title: How to Successfully Involve Target Groups that Are Difficult to Reach?

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Number of participants: 12

Who are you and to which institution do you belong?

Marleen Bovee: Senior Advisor Educational Development and programme manager Early School Leaving
Yolanda van der Hooft, project leader peer support at the Organisation: ROC Midden Nederland, School for Vocational Education, Utrecht in the Netherlands.

Starting questions:

The facilitators work with alumni students that mentor students who are facing challenges in the university.

According to the experience of the facilitators, the students who could benefit the most are at the same time the ones that are difficult to reach or drop out of the mentoring programme. Forcing them to participate would be counterproductive and not in line with the spirit of mentoring. How can difficult target groups be convinced to participate and enjoy the benefits of mentoring in a sustainable way?

Sequence of content:

The facilitators introduced the major question and their experience. After that the participants introduced themselves and their organisation. This was followed by a discussion in small groups on the question: which methods are working to involve difficult target groups and which are not?

The Session ended with a plenary presentation and discussion on how to put the knowledge into practice.

Main point of discussions:

What does not work: communication with legal guardian: Email doesn't work to stay in contact with the mentee, cooperation with professionals (e.g. Social workers).

Good practices: investing a lot of time, PR targeting on local media, building up trust through long-term-activities in the mentee's neighbourhood, sports and cultural activities as "door openers".

Results of the session:

- **The most successful way of communication is face to face.** That means we have to invest a lot of time in direct communication. Once the relationship is established keep contact through e-mails, facebook, SMS etc., ideally in the mother-tongue of the mentee.
- **PR in local media is the key for making the programme attractive for mentors, mentees, funding organisations and neighbourhoods.**
- **The matching process is very important.** The participants use different methods to match their mentors and mentees, e.g. speed dating, matching with a specific focus on biography, shared interests etc.

Main statements highlighting the results of the discussion:

- Successful Matching of mentoring relationships is based of organisational backing. It is much more difficult for small organisations.
- Context matters (e.g. distance, neighbourhood, media, social and political developments etc.).
- Successful mentoring programmes are based on a plenty of time invested in direct communication with mentees, mentors and guardians and everybody else who is affected by the programme.