

Title: Creating Added Value through Mentoring: Finding a Balance between Public Service Provision and Citizenship Involvement. The Case of Mentoring to Work for Immigrants.

Facilitator and room number: Peter De Cuyper and Hanne Vandermeerschen (University of Leuven, Belgium); 1.402

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Number of participants: 12

Who are you and to which institution do you belong?

Peter De Cuyper, Research Manager University of Leuven Hanne Vandermeerschen, Senior Researcher, University of Leuven Creating added value through mentoring: finding a balance between public service provision and citizenship involvement.

Starting questions:

Where does the role of the public employment agency stop and where does the mentor come in? Is volunteer mentoring always the right choice and instrument? Where do you draw the line in terms of tasks/role distribution between professional aid and voluntary support or should mentoring be left to professionals? What are the consequences of the evolution towards the reliance on citizens in such policy issues? Are there any pitfalls?

Sequence of content: The facilitator presented a PowerPoint presentation about the academic evaluation study of mentorship programmes targeting the support of immigrants to find their way to the labour market.

Main arguments presented by the facilitator:

- **Refugees do not have the networks and cultural knowledge** when they are new in the country. The government can't assist them in the way mentors could. The mentor can share his country-and-sector-specific knowledge and capital to support the mentee in finding an adequate job.
- **Volunteer mentoring should not function as a substitute for public services**, but can be very useful in cooperation with public service, creating added value.
- **It is important to find a balance between public service provision and citizenship involvement.** Organisers of mentoring programmes should be very much aware of what the roles for the mentors are and what not.

Main points of discussion:

- Increased popularity of mentoring programmes: People want to get involved, citizens take initiative and show involvement. This implements positive and negative effects. Voluntary mentors are activists and put pressure on public institutions.
- Specific and difficult labour market integration for immigrants needs specific involvement. How can we cope and bring together citizens that want to be involved with the difficult circumstances of labour market integration?

Main statements highlighting the results of the discussion:

- A professional mentoring includes not only professional training and preparation but also professional monitoring during the entire process of mentoring.
- The approach of professional and volunteer mentoring should be different. If they work in the same field, it should be clear who is responsible for what; creating added value instead of competition.

- If the professional services would be good enough, mentoring is not needed. Therefore the main target should be to improve the professional services.

Further remarks:

It is more and more difficult to find volunteers for such specific programmes. How do you deal with the mentor's expectations and disappointments (e.g. mentees not involved enough, take but don't give etc.)?