



SEMINAR ON MENTORING FOR EMPLOYABILITY *Organised in the framework of the Workability Europe Annual Conference 2008*

23 May 2008

Miramar Palace Conference Centre, San Sebastian, Spain

Summary Report

On 23 May 2008 Workability Europe (WE) organised a Seminar on *Mentoring for Employability* in San Sebastian, Spain. The Seminar was organised in the framework of the organisation's Annual Conference and was attended by more than 80 persons.

Martin Ohridski from the WE secretariat facilitated the Seminar. He presented the *Validating Mentoring 2 (VM2)* project funded under EU's Leonardo da Vinci Programme and led by the Marie Curie Association in Bulgaria. Workability Europe is one of the six partners in the consortium. Dr Val Chapman from the Centre for Inclusive Learning Support (University of Worcester) – another partner in the VM2 project – also made a contribution at the Seminar.



“ Mentoring can be a hugely empowering concept for those with a distance from the labour market . ”

Martin Ohridski

Defining “Mentoring” as “a process where one person (the Mentor) offers help, guidance, advice and support to facilitate learning or development of another person (the Mentee)”, Martin Ohridski first outlined the key concepts and

characteristics behind the term “Mentoring”. He then described in more detail the VM2 project itself in terms of its aims, target group and activities. Two especially interesting outputs from the project will be the revised Guides for Mentors and for Mentees. Martin Ohridski concluded by highlighting the benefits for both Mentors and Mentees involved in Mentoring programmes.

Dr Val Chapman offered her academic expertise and shared her practical experience of running Mentoring programmes for Mentees aged 18-25 and not in employment. At the outset, she outlined her Centre's interests in the areas of inclusive education and employment and mentioned its successful implementation of several EU-funded projects. She proceeded by recalling the difficulties disabled people seeking work face such as low self esteem, self confidence and aspirations and experiences of discrimination and suggested how Mentoring could overcome these. Dr Val Chapman then outlined some of issues facing the Centre for Inclusive Learning Support in the actual recruitment of Mentees and Mentors and in the running of activities. These included for instance the checking of Mentors' police records and the need to focus on certain types of disabilities.

“ There is a huge reward, both personally and in terms of professional development through acting as a Mentor for people with disabilities. In particular, aspiring managers in companies get such useful information and perspective from the process that the company inevitable reaps the benefits as well. ”
Dr Val Chapman

Following these two presentations, several persons approached the presenters to share their own experiences with (aspects of) Mentoring programmes. Evidently a number of organisations within WE's membership are running some type of Mentoring scheme even if they use different terminology to describe it. Discussions that took place explored how useful elements of VM2 could be introduced in other programmes and services such as supported employment or vocational training for people with disabilities.



The partners will follow-up on these ideas during the next months of the project implementation.

An exhibition stand with VM2 leaflets, brochures and website was displayed throughout the Annual Conference and it attracted many delegates.

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