

Mentors' Reflection Workshops Report

I. General Information

- **Country and Institution:** LAKA Baden-Württemberg
- **Title of the Event:** Mentors Reflection Workshops
- **Date of the Event:**
 - 29.06.2024
 - 08.07.2024 (online via Zoom)
 - 09.07.2024 (online via Zoom)
 - 13.07.2024 (in cooperation with Stadt Stuttgart)
- **Location of the Event:**
 - 29.06.2024: Charlottenstraße 25, Stuttgart
 - 08.07.2024 and 09.07.2024: Online via Zoom
 - 13.07.2024: Jägerstraße 14, Stuttgart

II. Participants

Background of the participants

- **Number of Participants:**
 - 29.06.2024: 4 participants (5 registered for the meeting, 8 registered in total)
 - 08.07.2024: 1 participant
 - 09.07.2024: 1 participant
 - 13.07.2024: 8 participants (12 registered for the meeting)
- **Country of Origin:** Ukraine, Gambia, Iran, Yugoslavia, Pakistan, Croatia, Syria, Afghanistan, Hong Kong

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- **Duration in Germany:** Between 2 years and 40 years
- **Official Status:** Asylum seekers, refugees, and individuals with German nationality
- **Age Range:** Average ages of 40 years and 20 years
- **Gender:** Female, male, diverse

Remember to attach a list of participants - signed.

> From the online-meetings there are Photos. From the presence meeting there are signed documents. The lists / photos of participants are attached.

Important: some of the participants did not sign the correct document. Ali and Leah participated in the mentor's workshop in Stuttgart, Victoria participated in the Online-Workshop in June.

However, for the pairing and the following Connection Cafés we suggested to Ali that he might change to be a mentee as there is a mentor quite motivated to support a mentee in person in the same home town.

III. Summary of the exchanges during the event

The workshops revealed several key insights:

1. **Mentor Expectations:** The mentors generally had low expectations regarding the outcomes of the workshops, primarily driven by a strong desire to help and support others. Their motivation stemmed from a genuine commitment to making a positive impact in their communities and providing guidance to those who may be navigating similar challenges they once faced.
2. **Integration and Language Proficiency:** All mentors are either working or studying in Germany, which has significantly contributed to their high proficiency in the German language. This linguistic capability not only facilitates effective communication but also helps in building trust and rapport with their mentees. Their ability to navigate both professional and academic environments in Germany demonstrates their successful integration into society.
3. **Personal Experience:** Two of the mentors shared that they had previously benefited from having mentors themselves. This experience was profoundly positive, providing them with valuable guidance and support during critical times in their lives. As a result, these mentors expressed a strong desire to "give something back" to the community, hoping to offer the same level of support and encouragement that they once received.

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4. **Willingness to Engage:** The mentors displayed a notable willingness to engage in mentoring relationships, particularly with non-native speakers. They showed a keen interest in meeting their mentees and forming tandems, understanding that such relationships can be mutually beneficial. This openness to cross-cultural interactions underscores their commitment to inclusivity and diversity.
5. **Perception of Violence:** During the discussions, it became apparent that the definition and boundaries of violence varied significantly among the mentors. These differences highlighted the importance of having nuanced conversations about what constitutes violence and how it is perceived by different individuals. Understanding these diverse perspectives is crucial for providing sensitive and effective support.
6. **Experiences with Prejudices:** Many mentors recounted personal experiences with prejudice, which has fueled their motivation to support others who may be facing similar challenges. Their firsthand encounters with discrimination have given them a unique perspective and a deep empathy for their mentees. This shared understanding can help in creating a safe and supportive environment for the mentees.
7. **Gratitude for Integration:** There was a shared sense of gratitude among the mentors for being successfully integrated into German society. They expressed appreciation for the opportunities they have received and the acceptance they have felt. This gratitude drives their desire to share their experiences and to help others achieve a similar sense of belonging and acceptance.
8. **Guideline Awareness:** While most mentors were already familiar with the information provided in the guidelines, they acknowledged that there is always something new to learn. This openness to continuous learning reflects their dedication to improving their mentoring skills and staying informed about best practices. The guidelines serve as a valuable resource for ensuring that mentors are well-prepared to support their mentees effectively.

These insights collectively highlight the strengths and motivations of the mentors, as well as the challenges and opportunities they perceive in their roles. The workshops not only facilitated knowledge sharing but also fostered a deeper understanding of the diverse experiences and perspectives within the mentor community.

IV. Workshop development

1. Did you include all the activities from the Agenda? If not, which ones did you exclude and why?

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We successfully incorporated most of the planned activities from the agenda into the workshops. The primary focus was on explaining the guidelines for mentors, which served as a foundational support tool for their roles. Additionally, we covered topics related to resilience, highlighting the importance of mental and emotional strength in the mentoring process. Discussions also extended to personal interests and hobbies, providing a holistic approach to understanding and connecting with mentees. These conversations aimed to equip mentors with practical strategies and insights to foster meaningful relationships.

2. Did any issues arise during the workshop? If yes, what kind of problems appeared from the participant point of view?

Several challenges emerged during the workshop sessions from the participants' perspectives. A significant issue was the difficulty in scheduling a common date for the workshops. Many of the mentors are widely involved in various volunteer projects, and most of them have many professional tasks during the week. Additionally, some mentors have family obligations, further complicating their availability. This scheduling conflict highlighted the need for flexible planning and the possibility of conducting multiple sessions to accommodate everyone's availability.

3. Did you, as an organizer, face any issues? If yes, what kind of problems did you face during the workshop?

As organizers, we faced several logistical and operational challenges. One of the main difficulties was recruiting a sufficient number of mentors who could attend the workshops simultaneously. Given the diverse and busy schedules of the mentors, it was challenging to coordinate meetings where all participants could be present. Consequently, we had to adapt by conducting some workshop sessions with only one mentor and the LAKA facilitators. This approach allowed for personalized attention but limited the benefits of group discussions and shared learning experiences.

Furthermore, the variation in mentor availability needed a more fragmented workshop schedule, requiring us to organize multiple sessions to ensure all content was covered comprehensively. Despite these efforts, aligning the schedules of all participants remained a persistent issue, impacting the overall cohesion of the workshop series.

Looking ahead, we have planned an online workshop for three participants who were unable to attend earlier sessions. LAKA remains confident in forming eight tandem pairs of mentors and mentees who will continue the project at the Connection Café. These pairs will have the flexibility to meet in person if they live nearby or continue their interactions online. This hybrid approach aims to accommodate the diverse schedules and preferences of the participants, ensuring sustained engagement and support.

The ongoing commitment to flexibility and adaptability in scheduling and conducting workshops is crucial for the success of the mentoring program. By addressing these challenges proactively, we aim

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to create a supportive and effective mentoring environment that meets the needs of both mentors and mentees.

Please note: There still will be an Online-Workshop for 3 of the participants. LAKA is convinced to find 8 tandem pairs with mentors and mentees who will continue the project at the Connection Cafe. Some of the pairs might meet in presence if they live close by, some of them might meet online.

V. Evaluation of the participants' satisfaction

Please report the feedback on the participants' satisfaction with the workshop – include images or data provided in the feedback form.

The participants did not want to do it in written form but they were open to give us feedback directly:

- 1. Curiosity and Engagement:** Participants expressed a high level of curiosity and enthusiasm about the project. They showed a keen interest in the documents and materials provided, indicating a strong desire to continue their involvement in the mentoring program. This curiosity reflects their eagerness to deepen their understanding of the mentoring process and to effectively apply the guidelines and strategies discussed during the workshops.
- 2. Commitment to Helping Others:** There was a unanimous commitment among participants to help others. The mentors demonstrated a strong sense of engagement and dedication to their roles, motivated by the desire to provide support and guidance to their mentees. This commitment is a testament to their altruistic values and their readiness to contribute positively to the community.
- 3. Preference for In-Person Meetings:** While the flexibility of online meetings was appreciated, many participants expressed a preference for in-person interactions. They believe that face-to-face meetings foster stronger connections and more effective communication. The personal touch of meeting in person is seen as invaluable in building trust and rapport with mentees. Therefore, accommodating in-person meetings where possible will be essential to enhance the mentoring relationships.
- 4. Importance of Setting Limits and Boundaries:** An important topic that participants highlighted was the need to discuss setting limits and boundaries in mentoring relationships. They recognized that establishing clear boundaries is crucial for maintaining healthy and professional interactions. Participants expressed a desire to delve deeper into this topic in future sessions, seeking guidance on how to set appropriate boundaries while providing effective support. This focus on boundaries will help ensure that both mentors and mentees

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have a clear understanding of their roles and expectations, promoting a respectful and productive mentoring environment.

Due to the interactive nature of the workshop and its flexibility in adapting to the needs of the group, participants preferred to provide verbal feedback about the workshop, which we have described in detail above.

Overall, the feedback indicates a positive reception of the workshops, with participants eager to continue their involvement and enhance their mentoring skills. The emphasis on curiosity, commitment, and the need for clear boundaries underscores the importance of ongoing support and development for mentors. Addressing these areas in future will be crucial for sustaining engagement and ensuring the success of the mentoring program.

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