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Basic concepts in mentoring

Estonian mentoring work package (wp) had invited the other participating countries to a mentoring seminar at the end of April (24-25.4.05). There were participants from Estonia, Latvia – a big group mentees and mentors, Poland, Norway and Finland. We had interesting presentations and discussions on different ways of mentoring: what mentoring is, what it can be, what it should be, etc. We realised that there are many ways of mentoring or working with an activity with the same goals as our micro business mentoring at FEM wp 3.

In order to help FEM wp 3 participants work with the wp we decided in Estonia that I will explain and open the concepts used in the connection of mentoring.

Here you will find explanations of some concepts. The list is not perfect but hopefully a good start for the discussion.

mentoring

- originates from the word mentor and Creek mythology: Ulysses asked his friend, Mentor to help and guide his son when he was away and not in the position of guiding him
- includes both giving advice and guiding in life
- a process where during a period of time there will be knowledge divided and transferred in a variety of fields
- an important factor is that you respect and believe that the more experienced persons can and will help as well as that you respect and believe that the younger ones are willing to learn
- the process of mentoring needs time in order to success, it should last at least one year; the persons should get to know each other and rely upon each other in order to build the best circumstances for cooperation
- is not advice from an expert or specialist, it is not giving you ready solutions to your problems
- is free of charge in most cases and the mentor is not paid for the work

- pair mentoring** - the traditional way of mentoring with a mentee and a mentor
- group mentoring**
 - there is a group of mentees, 4-6 persons, and a mentor
 - the additional value will be that the mentees act as mentors with each other, too and the mentor will also guide and help the group to keep their targets
- mentor**
 - is an experienced person who has promised to help the less experienced person/persons by taking to her/his task and responsibility to give and divide her/his experiences and knowledge gained in life to the mentee/mentees
 - usually she/he is older and thus more experienced than the mentee
- mentee**
 - is a person who has agreed to co-operate with a mentor in order develop herself/himself as a specialist in her/his branch as well as a human person
 - a mentee can be called actor, too

Finnish model of pair and group mentoring developed by the Women's Enterprise Agency (WEA)

- a process of one or one and a half year guided by a coordinator
- the mentees and mentors will be looked for and chosen specially in order to make the pairs and groups work smoothly and productively
- both the mentees and mentors will be trained to the mentoring process
- there will be training on different business issues during the process for all the participants
- the coordinator will help and assist all the participants during the process
- if the mentoring package is bought from the WEA there will be a manual to guide in different stages of the process

other concepts

- **coaching** is used in similar contexts with mentoring there are very similar activities as in mentoring
- coaching, however is more often used e.g. with business coaching which is carried out by business consultants with very high fees and not free of charge
- there are so called life coaches helping with different sorts of life questions, they also are not free of charge
- **advising** is activity where a specialist will give advices, solutions to questions but it is not, as a rule, working in the holistic way and long term like the mentor does