

Innovative Mentoring, Sponsorship and Networking Approaches

From Mapping to First Insights

Activity A4.1 - Mentoring Inventory

WP4 Lead: INFN | WP4 Co-Lead: University of Novi Sad



Oviedo, 21 April 2026
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CURRENT STATUS · APRIL 2026

WP4 Activities A4.1



01

Survey Design

Completed and validated across the consortium

03

Data Collection

Successfully finalised

02

Dissemination

Deployed across consortium and GENERA Network

04

First Analysis

Structured qualitative and descriptive analysis currently on going

Understand & Map

Mentoring Inventory Participation



19

Total institutions surveyed

Coverage across consortium and the extended GENERA Network

17

Institutions with mentoring

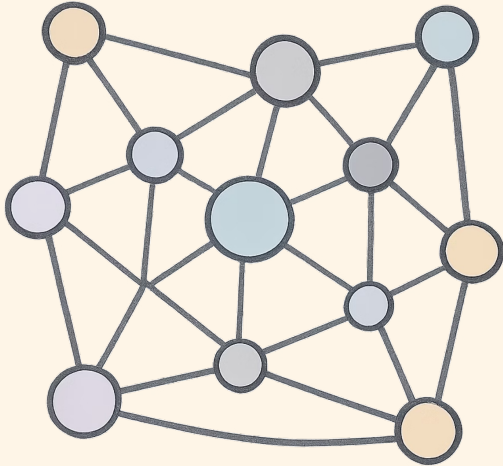
Active, structured mentoring initiatives already in place

2

Institutions without mentoring

Opportunities for future mentoring initiatives

What We Collected



These dimensions were designed to capture structural, operational and cultural aspects of mentoring programs enabling the identification of transferable and scalable practices

■ Ethics & Institutional Context

Governance frameworks and institutional positioning of mentoring

■ Gender Equality & Inclusion Framework

Alignment with GE strategies and inclusion commitments

■ Mentoring Programs

Structure, format, duration, and target groups

■ Intersectionality & Inclusion

Approaches to multiple and overlapping dimensions of diversity

■ Needs, Challenges & Lessons

Operational barriers and institutional learning

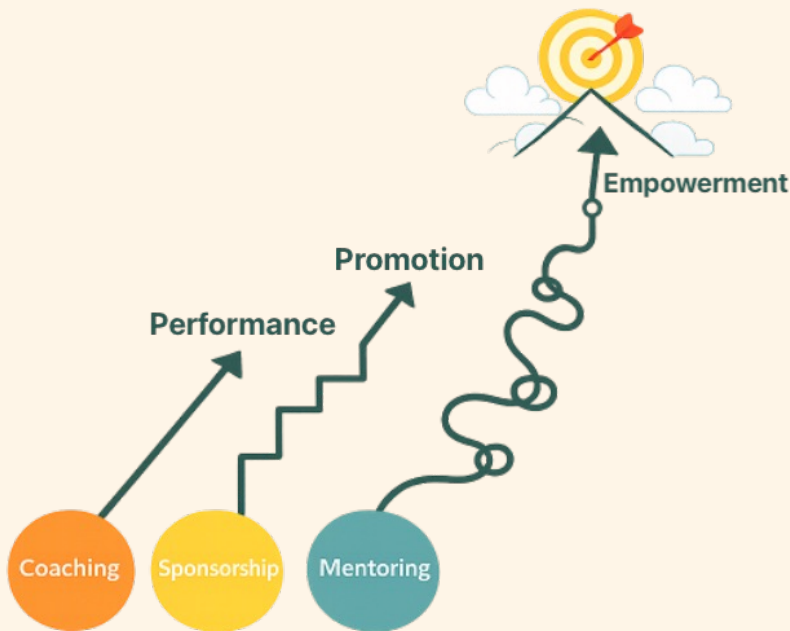
■ Networking & Sponsorship

Integration of networking and sponsorship mechanisms

■ Future Perspectives

Plans for scaling, adapting, or launching new programmes

Coaching-Sponsorship-Mentoring



Coaching

Task and performance-oriented

A coach uses active listening to identify areas of improvement, with duration tailored to the individual's needs.

Focus:

Performance improvement
Targeted development

Sponsorship

Opens doors

A sponsor is a high-status individual with influence and a vast network, who actively creates advancement opportunities for high-potentials.

Focus:

Active promotion
Creation of career opportunities

Mentoring

Relationship-oriented, long-term (typically 1 year)

Formally or informally organized

Mentors provide guidance, career advice, support skill development and goal-setting, mutual respect, not hierarchical interaction.

Focus:

Skills
Development and personal growth

Three distinct supportive actions: understanding their differences is essential for designing effective, transferable and innovative approaches across institutions

Analytical Framework

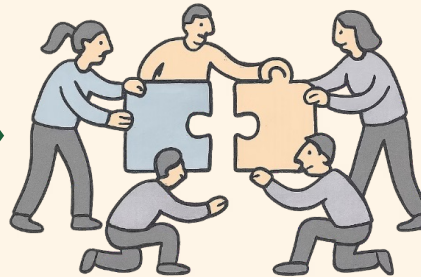
Mentoring Programme Lifecycle Analysis (MPLA) developed with Helene Schiffbaenker (Joanneum Research)*

A. Programme



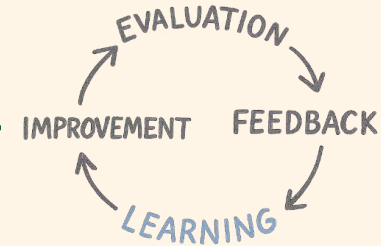
How mentoring programmes are structured

B. Implementation



How they are delivered in practice

C. Evaluation and Learning



How outcomes are assessed and improved

**Model used to map questionnaire results across the key phases of mentoring programme development*

Analytical Framework

Following data collection, responses were reorganised according to **MPLA framework** enabling consistent categorisation and comparison

Phase A - Programme Design

Includes:

programme objectives, target groups, mentoring formats, duration, gender and diversity integration...

Phase B - Implementation

Includes:

programme components, mentor selection, networking activities, operational organization...

Phase C - Evaluation and Learning

Includes:

evaluation methods, feedback processes, lessons learned...

Cross-review evaluation

Implemented across WP4 partners

Each response was reviewed by multiple partners

- reduced interpretative biases
- strengthened analytical robustness

Methodological Value

A safeguard for comparing mentoring models across diverse institutional contexts

Key outcome

Findings reflect shared institutional patterns rather than single-partner interpretations

Phase A

Programme Design: initial findings

Based on the structured reading of institutional responses, several clear patterns emerge in how mentoring programmes are designed and positioned within research institutions

Formally Structured & Institutionally Supported

Most programmes are formally structured and frequently embedded within Gender Equality or Diversity strategies, signaling strong institutional commitment.

Leadership Development as a Recurrent Objective

Across multiple institutions, leadership development emerges as a consistent programme goal, reflecting broader strategic priorities in research organizations.

Target Groups Concentrate on Early Career Stages

PhD candidates, postdoctoral researchers, and early-career staff are the primary beneficiaries highlighting mentoring's role at key academic transition points. Few programmes explicitly target organisational transformation.

Multi-Disciplinary & adaptable program design

Several programmes operate across multiple disciplines, indicating flexible and transferable design models suitable for adaptation across contexts.

Implementation Models: diversity and constraints

Initial comparison across institutions reveals both richness in design and meaningful operational constraints that shape how mentoring is delivered in practice

Strong Variability

Duration, organizational scale, disciplinary focus, and funding structures differ significantly between institutions

One-to-One Mentoring Dominates

The most common core structure, often complemented by peer or group mentoring formats for added flexibility

Recurring Challenges

Limited mentor availability: securing experienced, committed mentors remains a persistent challenge

Coordination demands: managing matching, scheduling, and programme logistics requires dedicated capacity

Resource limitations: staffing, administrative support, and infrastructure are often insufficient

Funding Gaps

Some programmes operate without dedicated funding, indicating potential sustainability constraints that require attention

The constraints represent key areas where WP4 can develop shared solutions and transferable support models

Evaluation Practices: emerging signals

Evaluation practices show growing attention to monitoring activities, but reveal significant gaps in assessing long-term impact.

Heterogeneous Evaluation Practices

Evaluation approaches vary significantly across institutions, ranging from structured monitoring systems to informal feedback mechanisms

Limited Longitudinal Tracking

Few programmes report systematic tracking of long-term career outcomes

Reliance on Satisfaction Surveys

Many programmes use participant satisfaction as a primary indicator, raising questions about long-term impact measurement

Emerging Need for Shared Indicators

These differences highlight the need to explore common evaluation criteria across institutions

Emerging Areas of Interest

Preliminary observations

Diversity of Formats

Strong variation across institutions

Leadership & GDI Focus

Increasing attention to leadership, networking (career paths, transformative leadership models attractive vs. hierarchical) & GDI dimensions

Recurring Challenges

Limited resources
Mentor availability and their role for change
Long-term programme sustainability
Institutional inertia

Evaluation Gaps

Challenges of formal evaluation practices:
Are satisfaction surveys sufficient to measure long-term impact?
How we measure the real changes put in place?

Transferable Models

Promising practices for
cross-institutional adaptation

Building the Next Steps Together

Oviedo meeting

The WP4 common session is designed as a collaborative working moment not only to report findings but to refine them together

Discuss preliminary findings

Validate interpretations collectively

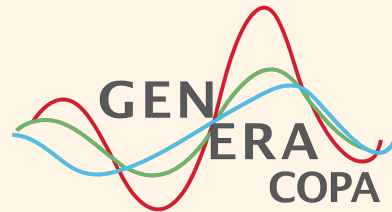
Identify promising practices

Identify challenges, share solutions and develop transferable support models

Identify innovative common and/or specific practices

Prepare the transition to Activity A4.2
«Implement GDI in mentoring programmes»

The Mentoring Inventory (A4.1) is not an endpoint but the foundation for evidence-based actions!



Thanks!

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