



Project ENCOUNTER: EXPERIENCES OF YOUTH IN NATURAL MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS (2021-23) has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 101027291.

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Research aim

Project ENCOUNTER addresses experiences and perceptions of natural mentoring relationships in general population of current young people (12-15 years) in the Czech/EU context.



Objectives

To examine the characteristics, dynamics, and perceived benefits of the natural mentoring relationships (NMRs) experienced by young people (12-15 years) in the Czech and European context.

To contrast the functions, characteristics, and dynamics of natural mentoring among gender; and the features of NMRs experienced by young adolescents in the CZ and in an international context.

To conceptualize the theoretical, interdisciplinary youth-centred framework on youth mentoring phenomena.

To recommend the set of tools for use of natural mentoring in the secondary schools and social services of youths in the Czech Republic and beyond.



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ENCOUNTER Partners and participants

50 YP and 5 YP together with their mentors (12-16 years) are selected from 7 secondary schools, 1 mentoring programme and 1 art youth group.



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Research methods

A youth-centred qualitative approach with focus on youth experiences.
In-depth semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires.
Art-based methods and photo-elicitation method applied.

An animated video based on the literature review on NMRs shown to YP as a scaffold to the exploration of their natural mentoring experiences.

In-depth thematic analysis using QSR NVivo 12 software is applied to 500 open-ended questionnaires and 50 in-depth semi-structured interviews with YP.

BENEFITS of participation for youths



Awareness of natural mentors

Enhancement of the NMRs

Photo exhibition on the photos elicited using natural mentoring meetings

Art created by YP on the theme of their natural mentors

BENEFITS of participation for partnerschools and social services organisations



Workshops on youth mentoring, well-being and results of ENCOUNTER Project

Co-created toolbox for implementation of youth mentoring awareness and well-being in secondary schools

Co-created toolbox for youth-initiated mentoring approach in mentoring social services

BENEFITS of participation for parents



Support and strengthening of young people's connections with significant non-parental adults

Support of youth's resilience and well-being

Information about the principles and benefits in experiences



Preliminary research findings

Most YP in our sample can identify a natural mentor with the explanation on who the natural mentor is via youth-centred animation

NMRs are often activity-focused and develop around shared interest

YP identify their natural mentors among: Extended family members (Older siblings, Grandparents); Leaders of the leisure-time activities (Coaches, Art teachers); Favourite teachers; Older best friends, not necessarily adults; Imaginary, virtual and digital HEROES (e.g. YouTubers they follow)

Young people often identify more than one mentor
Different mentors for different supports and interests

Mentors don't need to be much older or in adult age but are perceived as **MORE EXPERIENCED** in comparison to peers

Some YP identified mentors they don't see regularly but who they still perceive as significant and important supports and role models in their lives

Mentors are different to other people, mentors support beyond the shared interest and related activities

Natural mentors are perceived as: Closer than others around youth, reliable, role models in problem-solving and future aspirations

Deliverables for academics, policy-makers and youth mentoring practitioners and lay public



Academic publications

Workshops for practitioners in secondary schools and youth mentoring social services

Co-created tool-box on implementation of natural mentoring awareness/youth-initiated intervention for secondary schools

Policy brief for Ministry of Education, Youths and Sport on Natural mentoring, well-being and the potential implementation within the National Curriculum Framework on well-being for secondary schools

Science Communication of the ENCOUNTER project, its themes and results to public including children and youths

Children & Youth Perspective Conference and Festival @Charles University in Prague on 14th-15th Sep 2023 with international KEYNOTE in the field of Childhood studies

Extension of the project in ENCOUNTER Mentoring International with partners from Ukraine, Romania with potential for other international partners to join



Training of BA and MA students in ENCOUNTER Project methods and themes

A module on Mentoring for Children and Youths is delivered to BA and MA students @Faculty of Humanities, Charles University

Five BA Students and 1 MA student are trained in youth-centred research methods and ENCOUNTER research themes during their final year research projects

Three students participate in ENCOUNTER project as research assistants and are co-authors of project's science communication and other deliverables