ERAMUS+ PROJECT

Building inclusion-driven dual VET
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TRAINING RESOURCE

# GUIDE FOR TRAINERS

## Inclusive Mentorship in Dual Education

for Qualifications in Digital Marketing and Internet Applications

PREPARE • GUIDE • INCLUDE



INCLUSION DRIVEN DUAL VET

Co-funded by the European Union

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Purpose of the Guide

This guide is intended for trainers who deliver training to workplace mentors in companies participating in dual VET programmes in the fields of digital marketing and internet applications. Its main purpose is to support trainers in preparing and delivering training aimed at developing mentors' competences as facilitators of an inclusive practical learning environment.

In today's dynamic professional environments, the mentor's role extends beyond sharing technical knowledge and supervising the performance of specific tasks. Mentors play an important role in creating conditions in which every trainee can participate fully, develop professional skills, and gradually take responsibility for their own professional development.

Inclusive dual VET requires a different understanding of the mentor's role:

- from a technical expert to a learning partner;
- from supervising performance to designing an inclusive learning environment;
- from assessing results to supporting development.

The programme follows the principle that inclusion does not happen automatically when trainees gain access to a workplace and its resources. Mentors need to design inclusion intentionally through the way they allocate tasks, provide feedback, organise communication, and build relationships within the team.

## 1.2. The specific role of the trainer

Trainers delivering the programme should see themselves as facilitators of a professional development process, alongside their role as experts who share knowledge.

The programme targets experienced professionals working in digital agencies, IT companies, and online business environments. These participants usually have a high level of professional competence, practical experience of real work processes, and a sound understanding of industry requirements.

At the same time, they often lack formal preparation in inclusive education, managing differences, working with trainees who have diverse needs, and adapting workplace learning situations. For this reason, the trainer should follow an approach that connects new concepts with the participants' professional experience.

The central question is: "How can a mentor's everyday decisions create more or fewer opportunities for trainees to participate and develop?" This question offers a more practical starting point than asking what mentors need to know about inclusion.

## 2. METHODOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES OF THE TRAINING

### 2.1. Inclusion as a design principle

The first principle of the programme is the understanding that inclusion forms an integral part of workplace learning, rather than an additional activity introduced only when a problem arises.

In practice, this means that the mentor plans in advance:

- how the trainee will participate in real tasks;
- how the trainee will gain access to information;
- what support will be available when difficulties arise;
- how the trainee's progress will be monitored.

Digital professional environments carry a particular risk of hidden exclusion. For example:

- demanding tasks are assigned only to the fastest trainees;
- some trainees remain involved only in routine activities for long periods;
- opportunities to participate in client projects remain limited.

The mentor's role is to recognise these patterns and actively create conditions for equitable participation.

### 2.2. Equity through different pathways to success

An important focus of the training is the distinction between equal treatment and equitable treatment.

Equal treatment means giving every trainee the same task, in the same way, and within the same timeframe.

An equitable approach means ensuring that every trainee has access to meaningful learning, receives the support they need, and can meet professional standards with appropriate guidance.

Inclusive learning maintains professional expectations while removing unnecessary barriers that prevent trainees from meeting them.

# MODULE 1

# THE MENTOR AS AN AGENT OF INCLUSION

# IN THE DIGITAL WORKPLACE

## 1. Aim of the module

The aim of this module is to change mentors' understanding of their role, from specialists who supervise the performance of tasks to professionals who actively create conditions for learning. Upon completing the module, participants should be able to recognise mechanisms that lead to unequal participation; analyse how the allocation of tasks affects trainees' development; and design workplace situations that provide genuine learning opportunities.

## 2. Main messages for the trainer

### 2.1. The digital environment as a space for learning

Digital marketing and internet applications are professional fields characterised by a fast pace of work, continuous assessment of results, visibility of individual contributions, and reliance on technological skills.

These characteristics create numerous learning opportunities, but they can also create risks of exclusion. The trainer should help mentors understand that the way work is organised determines how learning takes place.

### 2.2. Hidden mechanisms of exclusion

During the training, mentors should analyse everyday situations such as the following:

**Situation 1:**

*"We assign the more demanding tasks to those who already achieve the best results."*

**Potential risk:**

Trainees who need more support never receive the opportunity to develop these skills.

**Situation 2:**

*"Let the trainee complete easier tasks first, until they prove that they are capable."*

**Potential risk:**

The trainee remains in an assistant role and does not gain access to genuine professional experience.



**Practical Exercise 1:**

*"Who receives the opportunity to develop?"*

**Aim:**

To analyse the relationship between the allocation of tasks and equal access to learning.

**Instructions:**

Participants describe a typical work process, such as the development of a digital campaign, and answer the following questions:

Which tasks are assigned to beginners?

Which tasks remain accessible only to the most experienced team members?

How can the process be structured so that every trainee, regardless of their disability or the barriers they face, can gradually progress towards tasks with a higher level of complexity?

**Trainer's summary:** The mentor does more than manage the work. The mentor manages learning opportunities for people who experience different disabilities or barriers.

**3. Inclusion as structured participation**

One of the trainer's main responsibilities is to help mentors move from the understanding:

*"I treat all trainees in the same way"*

towards the more developed understanding:

*"I create conditions in which all trainees have a genuine opportunity to participate and develop."*

In a workplace environment, inclusion is not measured solely by the trainee's physical presence in the company. Genuine inclusion becomes visible through the trainee's participation in meaningful professional activities.

Inclusive practice means that the trainee has access to real workplace tasks; participates in processes that have professional value; receives feedback on their development; is gradually involved in more demanding activities; and understands the connection between their own work and the team's results.

***Methodological Message for the Trainer***

The trainer should direct the participants' attention to the following question:

*"If a trainee spends six months in the company, what will they actually have learned, and which professional situations will they have experienced?"*

This question helps participants determine whether the training has provided genuine professional development or has consisted solely of performing support tasks.

**Practical Exercise 2**

*"The Trainee's Development Path"*

**Aim:**

Participants develop a model for the gradual development of competences.

**Group work:**

Participants select a typical digital marketing task.

**Examples:**

- preparing content for social media;
- analysing an audience;
- setting up an advertising campaign;
- processing data from digital tools.

They then develop the following:

| Stage | Trainee's role | Mentor's role |
|---|---|---|
| Initial | Observation and supported participation | Explanation and demonstration |
| Intermediate | Completing parts of the process | Guidance and feedback |
| Advanced | Independent work | Coaching and assessment |

**Conclusion for the trainer:**

Different trainees may progress at different rates, depending on the type of disability they have or the barriers they encounter, but everyone should have access to a pathway for professional growth.

**4. The mentor as a designer of equitable opportunities**

In dual VET, mentors have a significant influence on trainees' development through the decisions they make every day: which task will be assigned; how much support will be provided; when the trainee will receive greater independence; and how feedback will be given.

These decisions are often made informally and intuitively. This is precisely where unconscious bias can emerge.

**Examples of unconscious assumptions:**

*"This trainee works more slowly, so they probably lack potential."*

**Alternative approach:**

*"What support or alternative way of presenting the task would allow the trainee to demonstrate their abilities?"*

*"It is easier to assign the task to someone who already knows how to complete it."*

**Alternative approach:**

*"How can I turn this task into an opportunity for development?"*

**Practical Exercise 3**

*"Recognising Hidden Bias"*

**Case study:**

There are two trainees in the team.

**Trainee A**

completes tasks quickly;

is confident when presenting ideas;

frequently asks questions.

**Trainee B**

works more slowly due to their disability;

needs more structured instructions;

produces detailed analyses;

avoids presenting in public.

The manager decides to involve only Trainee A in client meetings.

**Questions for discussion:**

*What decision has been made?*

*What development opportunities does each trainee receive?*

*Is there a risk of judging their potential prematurely?*

*How can the mentor ensure equitable participation?*

**Main message:**

The speed at which a task is completed is not the only indicator of professional potential.

**5. Psychological safety as a condition for learning**

Digital professional environments are often dynamic and results-oriented. This creates a risk that trainees will become afraid of making mistakes.

Learning in a professional environment inevitably involves:

- experimenting;
- asking questions;
- correcting mistakes;
- improving gradually.

For this reason, the mentor should create a psychologically safe environment.

**Characteristics of a psychologically safe environment:** The trainee can ask for help; acknowledge that they do not understand a task; suggest an idea; and receive criticism without being humiliated.

The trainer should emphasise the following:

Psychological safety does not mean an absence of expectations.

It means maintaining high professional standards while providing a supportive path towards meeting them.

**Practical Exercise 4**

"From Criticism to Development"

**Aim:**

To develop skills for providing inclusive feedback.

Participants reformulate the following statements:

❌ *"This is not good enough."*

as:

✔ "There is a good foundation in this section. For the next version, let us improve the analysis of the target audience."

❌ *"You clearly do not understand digital marketing."*

as:

✔ "Let us look once again at the reasoning behind this strategy and identify together what can be improved."

**6. The trainer's role in delivering the module**

The trainer should:

**Encourage:**

- the sharing of real experiences;
- critical reflection;
- the analysis of specific situations.

**Avoid:**

- presenting mentors as "the problem";
- moralising;
- abstract definitions that have no connection with practice.

Participants need to understand that inclusive mentoring does not create an additional burden. It provides a more effective way to develop human potential within the organisation.

## 7. Assessment of Module 1

At the end of the module, the trainer can conduct a short reflection activity.

**Questions:**

Which everyday decisions made by mentors affect the inclusion of trainees with disabilities?

How can I increase each trainee's access to meaningful tasks?

Which of my automatic judgements could restrict trainees' development?

What will I change in my own practice so that I become more open to accepting and respecting differences?

## Expected Outcomes of Module 1

Upon completing the module, participants:

✓ understand their role as creators of an inclusive learning and working environment;
✓ recognise hidden mechanisms of exclusion;
✓ can analyse how learning opportunities are allocated to different trainees;
✓ can create conditions for psychological safety;
✓ understand that inclusion and high professional standards can coexist.

# MODULE 2

# DIFFERENCES, BIAS AND EQUITY

# IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF DIGITAL SKILLS

## 1. Aim of the Module

The aim of this module is to develop mentors' ability to recognise and manage differences among trainees as a natural characteristic of the modern workplace. In the context of dual VET, differences among trainees may relate to:

- different previous educational experiences;
- different rates of acquiring new knowledge;
- different communication styles;
- different levels of confidence;
- physical, sensory, cognitive, or other specific needs;
- different levels of support required for the successful inclusion of all trainees who experience disabilities or other barriers.

The main message of the module is: Differences among trainees are not a problem that needs to be eliminated, but a characteristic of the learning environment that needs to be managed professionally.

## 2. Methodological guidelines for the trainer

The trainer should begin the module by encouraging participants to reconsider a widespread belief:

"A good mentor is someone who trains everyone in the same way."

The trainer should introduce the following concept instead:

"A good mentor is someone who provides each trainee with appropriate conditions for meeting professional standards according to their abilities."

This means that the mentor should be able to balance:

- the trainee's individual needs;
- the requirements of the profession;
- the actual conditions within the company.

## 3. Understanding differences in the learning process

### 3.1. Differences in the way people learn

In digital professions, people often assume that all young people naturally possess technological competence. This assumption can be misleading.



Access to technology does not automatically mean having the ability to use digital tools professionally; understanding business logic; solving problems independently; or working confidently in a professional environment.

The mentor should distinguish between everyday use of technology and professional digital competence.

**Example:**

A trainee may actively use social media but experience difficulties with analysing a target audience; creating a content strategy; or interpreting marketing indicators.

This does not indicate a lack of potential, but a need for structured professional training.

**4. Cognitive diversity as a resource**

One of the main ideas behind managing differences is that different ways of thinking can serve as a resource for the organisation. This is particularly important in digital professions because successful solutions require creativity, analysis, critical thinking, an understanding of consumer behaviour, and an ability to adapt.

Trainees may differ in the way they process information; their preferred approach to solving problems; their pace of work; and the way they present ideas. The mentor's role is to identify how these different strengths can be developed.

**Practical Exercise 1**

"Different Approach, Equal Potential"

**Aim:**

To analyse how differences in working styles can serve as a resource.

**Case study:**

There are two trainees in the team:

**Trainee A**

generates many ideas;

works quickly;

sometimes overlooks details.

**Trainee B**

works more slowly;

asks many clarifying questions;

conducts an in-depth analysis.

**Questions:**

What are the strengths of each trainee?

How can the mentor draw on these differences?

What would happen if we assessed only the speed of performance?

**Conclusion:**

A different working style should not automatically be interpreted as a disadvantage.

## 5. Unconscious bias in the assessment of trainees

### 5.1. What Is bias?

Bias is an automatic judgement or expectation that influences our decisions, often without our awareness. In the workplace, it can influence the selection of tasks; the level of trust placed in a trainee; the opportunities provided; and the way feedback is given.

### 5.2. Common forms of bias in mentoring

**Bias 1:**

"A fast worker is more competent."

In a digital environment, speed is often regarded as a primary indicator of success.

Yet speed does not always indicate quality; understanding; or sustainable knowledge.

**Bias 2:**

"A confident trainee has greater potential."

Some trainees may possess strong abilities while being more reserved; needing more time; or avoiding public presentations.

**Bias 3:**

"If a person needs support, they are less capable."

This is particularly important when working with people with disabilities.

The need for adaptation does not indicate lower ability; lower professional potential; or an inability to develop.

**Practical Exercise 2**

"Assess the Situation Without Making Assumptions"

**Aim:**

To recognise automatic judgements.

**Situation:**

A trainee with a disability needs more time to learn how to work with new software.

The mentor's first reaction is:

"This profession is probably not suitable for them."

**Questions:**

What facts do we actually have?

What assumptions are we making?

What support can be provided?

How can we assess the trainee's potential objectively?

**6. Equity in skills development**

### 6.1. Equal access to development opportunities

In dual VET, equity means that every trainee has access to demanding professional tasks; feedback; the mentor's attention and time; and opportunities for progress.

This does not mean that everyone receives exactly the same tasks.

**Example:**

Two trainees participate in a digital campaign.

One trainee can analyse data independently.

The other trainee needs more detailed instructions, visual examples, and a step-by-step presentation of the task.

An equitable approach allows both trainees to participate in the analysis, while providing them with different levels of support.

## 7. Practical tool for mentors

### Equitable Task Allocation Map

Before assigning a task, the mentor can ask the following questions:

**1. Learning value**

What will the trainee learn through this task?

**2. Accessibility**

Does the trainee have the necessary information and support?

**3. Development**

Does the task provide an opportunity to reach the next level of competence?

**4. Participation**

Do different trainees receive genuine opportunities to contribute?

## 8. The trainer's role in delivering the module

The trainer should create a safe environment for discussion because the topic of bias can be sensitive.

It is important to avoid creating the impression:

"Mentors are biased."

The trainer should introduce the following perspective instead:

"All people have automatic assessment mechanisms. Professionalism is reflected in our ability to recognise and manage them."

**9. Assessment of Module 2**

**Reflection questions:**

Which differences among trainees can serve as a resource?

Which biases may influence my decisions as a mentor?

How do I ensure equal access to development?

How can I adapt the support I provide while maintaining professional standards?

**Expected Outcomes of Module 2**

Upon completing the module, participants:

✓ understand differences as a resource;

✓ recognise the risk of unconscious bias;

✓ can assess trainees more objectively;

✓ can create equitable pathways for development;

✓ apply the principles of managing differences in their mentoring practice.

# MODULE 3

# INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION AND DEVELOPMENTAL FEEDBACK

# IN DIGITAL WORK PROCESSES

## 1. Aim of the Module

The aim of this module is to develop mentors' ability to use communication as a primary tool for creating a clear and accessible learning environment, building trust and psychological safety, supporting trainees' independence, and encouraging professional development.

In the context of dual VET, communication is more than a means of conveying information. It determines:

- whether the trainee understands what is expected of them;
- whether they feel part of the team;
- whether they feel confident enough to ask questions;
- whether they can learn from their mistakes.

The main message of the module is: The quality of communication determines the quality of learning opportunities.

## 2. Methodological guidelines for the trainer

The trainer should begin the module with a short discussion.

**Question for participants:**

"When was the last time you assigned a task to a trainee and then discovered that they had understood something different from what you intended?"

The aim is to help participants realise that many difficulties in the learning process do not arise from a lack of ability, but from unclear instructions, incomplete expectations, a lack of context, or insufficient feedback.

*3. Communication as the Infrastructure of Inclusion*

Communication in the digital workplace is often fast and informal. It takes place through short messages; tasks assigned through digital platforms; comments in documents; online meetings; and automated project management systems.

This dynamic can be effective, but it also creates a risk that some trainees who experience disabilities or other barriers will be excluded from the process.



**Example:**

A mentor writes:

"Prepare the campaign for next week."

This task may be clear to an experienced professional.

For a trainee, however, several questions remain:

What is the aim of the campaign?

Who is the target audience?

Which tools should be used?

How will the result be assessed?

When can the trainee ask for help?

**Inclusive version:**

"Prepare a proposal for a social media campaign. The aim is to reach young consumers aged 18 to 25. Use the available audience data. Present an initial idea by Friday, and we will discuss it together."

In this version, the trainee receives context; an expected result; a timeframe; and an opportunity for feedback.

**Practical Exercise 1**

"Make the Task Clear"

**Aim:**

To develop skills for creating clear instructions.

**Instructions:**

Participants receive short workplace tasks.

**Example:**

"Optimise the advertisement."

They should reformulate the task by adding:

Aim;

Expected result;

Main steps;

Quality criteria;

Deadline;

Method of receiving feedback.

**Summary for the trainer:**

Clear instructions do not restrict independence. They create a framework within which the trainee can act confidently.

## 4. Developmental feedback

### 4.1. The importance of feedback in Dual VET

Feedback is one of the main mechanisms for learning in the workplace.

It allows the trainee to understand what they are doing well; what they need to improve; and how they can reach the next level.

Inclusive feedback should be specific; timely; focused on behaviour and results; oriented towards development; and adapted to the type of disability or barriers experienced by the trainee.

### 4.2. The difference between assessment and development

**Evaluative feedback:**

"This is not good enough."

**Problem:**

The trainee receives an assessment but does not understand what needs to be changed.

**Developmental feedback:**

"The main idea is appropriate. To make the campaign more effective, let us improve the target group analysis and the selection of performance indicators."

**Benefits:**

- identifies strengths;
- provides a specific direction;
- maintains motivation.

**Practical Feedback Model**

The trainer presents the following model to the mentors:

**1. Observation**

What actually happened?

"You used clear visual elements in the post."

**2. Impact**

What was the result?

"This makes the main message easier to understand."

**3. Next step**

What can be improved?

"Next time, add an analysis of the audience's responses."

*5. Communication with Trainees Who Have Different Needs*

When working with people with disabilities or members of other vulnerable groups, mentors should pay attention to the content of their communication and the way in which it is presented.

**Good practices:**

**1. Checking understanding**

Instead of asking:

"Did you understand the task?"

which often leads to the automatic response:

"Yes."

A better approach would be:

"Can you explain how you would begin the task if you were working on it independently now?"

**2. Providing information in stages**

When working with demanding digital processes, it is helpful to:

divide the task into steps;

define intermediate objectives;

conduct short progress checks.

**3. Using different communication channels**

Depending on the trainee's needs, mentors can use:

written instructions;

visual examples;

demonstrations;

models;

checklists.

**Practical Exercise 2**

"A Difficult Conversation with a Trainee"

**Aim:**

To develop communication skills for dealing with challenging situations.

**Case study:**

A trainee does not complete tasks within the agreed deadlines. The mentor notices that the trainee avoids asking questions and feels uncomfortable admitting that they are experiencing difficulties.

**Task:**

Participants develop a conversation between the mentor and the trainee.

The conversation should include:

a supportive opening;

clarification of the reasons;

specific expectations;

an offer of support.

**6. Supporting autonomy through dialogue**

The mentor's aim is not to make the trainee dependent on constant instructions.

Inclusive mentoring gradually develops:

- independence;
- confidence;
- decision-making ability.

Instead of saying:

"Do it this way."

A better approach would be:

"How would you approach this task? Let us discuss the possible solutions together."

Instead of saying:

"This is wrong."

A better approach would be:

"What was your reasoning, and how could you improve your approach when you work on a similar task in the future?"

*7. The Trainer's Role in Delivering the Module*

The trainer should:

✓ demonstrate an inclusive communication style;

✓ encourage participants to share real situations;

✓ use examples from the digital workplace;

✓ demonstrate that communication skills are a professional competence.

**8. Assessment of Module 3**

**Reflection questions:**

How does my communication style affect the trainee's inclusion?

Do I provide sufficient context when assigning tasks?

Do I use feedback as a tool for development?

How can I provide greater support for trainees' independence?

**Expected Outcomes of Module 3**

Upon completing the module, participants:

✓ create clear and accessible instructions;

✓ use feedback as a tool for development;

✓ can conduct supportive conversations;

✓ adapt their communication to individual needs;

✓ encourage trainees' autonomy.

# MODULE 4

# DESIGNING AN INCLUSIVE DIGITAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

## 1. Aim of the module

The aim of this module is to develop mentors' ability to transform the digital workplace into a structured, accessible, and supportive learning ecosystem.

Within the dual VET system, learning does not take place separately from real work. Work processes, team interactions, and organisational culture become the main environment in which professional competences are acquired.

For this reason, the quality of dual VET depends on what the trainee does and on:

- how the work is organised;
- how the new trainee is introduced to the team;
- how opportunities for participation are created;
- how support is provided when difficulties arise.

The main message of the module is:

Inclusive learning is not something added to the workplace. The workplace needs to be designed in a way that enables learning and participation.

## 2. Methodological guidelines for the trainer

The trainer begins the module with the following question:

"When a new person starts working in your organisation, how do they understand what they are expected to do?"

The trainer then asks additional questions:

Is there a structured onboarding process?

Who explains the tasks?

Is there someone the trainee can approach for support?

How do you determine whether the trainee is making progress?

The aim is to help participants understand that many difficulties experienced by trainees result from a lack of clear structure rather than a lack of ability.

## 3. The workplace as a learning environment

In the traditional understanding, work and learning are often viewed as separate processes:



Work → completing tasks

Learning → acquiring knowledge

In dual VET, these two processes are combined:

Work = a space for professional learning

This means that every workplace task can become an opportunity to acquire a skill; a source of feedback; and a step towards professional independence.

**Example from digital marketing:**

**Task:**

"Create a social media post."

In an ordinary workplace situation, this is simply a task.

In an inclusive learning situation, it becomes a process:

**Stage 1:**

Understanding the aim:

Who is the content intended for?

What result is expected?

**Stage 2:**

Implementation:

selecting the format;

creating the content;

working with relevant tools.

**Stage 3:**

Reflection:

What works?

What can be improved?

**4. Structuring digital work as a learning process**

The mentor should be able to divide demanding professional activities into stages of learning.

This is particularly important for:

trainees with no previous professional experience;

people with disabilities;

trainees who need more structure;

people who have lower levels of confidence in a digital environment.

**Task Structuring Model**

**1. Preparation**

The mentor explains:

why the task is important;

how it relates to the professional process;

what the expectations are.

**2. Demonstration**

The mentor presents:

an example;

a working method;

quality criteria.

**3. Supported Practice**

The trainee completes the task:

with guidance;

with feedback at intermediate stages;

with an opportunity to make corrections.

**4. Independence**

The trainee assumes greater responsibility.

The mentor moves from instruction to coaching.

**Practical Exercise 1**

"From a Task to a Learning Process"

**Aim:**

To help participants learn how to transform everyday tasks into opportunities for development.

**Instructions:**

Select a real task from your organisation.

**Examples:**

creating an advertising campaign;

analysing data;

managing content;

optimising a web page.

Complete the following:

| Question | Answer |
| --- | --- |
| What should the trainee learn? | |
| What prior knowledge is required? | |

What support is needed?

How will we know that the trainee has made progress?

**5. Inclusive onboarding process**

The first days and weeks in a company play a critical role in developing a sense of belonging.

An unclear start can lead to:

uncertainty;

isolation;

fear of asking questions;

premature withdrawal.

**Main elements of inclusive onboarding:**

**1. Clear Presentation of the Role**

The trainee should know:

what their role is;

what is expected of them;

how they will be supported.

**2. Introduction to the Team**

The trainee should be introduced as a developing member of the team, rather than as someone who is there temporarily to observe.

**3. Access to Information**

The mentor should check:

whether the trainee has access to the necessary platforms;

whether they understand the work procedures;

whether they know whom they can approach for help.

**Practical Exercise 2**

"The Trainee's First Day"

**Case study:**

A new trainee participating in a dual VET programme starts working at the company.

The trainee has basic digital skills but no experience of working in a professional environment.

Participants should develop a plan for the trainee's first day that covers:

what needs to be presented;

who will be involved;

which tasks can be assigned;

how a sense of belonging will be created.

*6. Removing Invisible Barriers*

Many barriers in the digital workplace are not immediately apparent.

They may include:

**Unclear Expectations**

The trainee does not know:

what "a job well done" means;

how their work will be assessed.

**Too Many Tools**

Digital teams often work with numerous platforms for:

task management;

communication;

analysis;

design;

reporting.

This can be confusing for a new trainee.

**Lack of Feedback**

If the trainee receives feedback only when they make a mistake, they may perceive the process as punitive.

**Tool for Mentors**

**Inclusive Workplace Map**

The mentor assesses the following areas:

**Tasks**

☐ Does the trainee receive genuine professional tasks?

☐ Do they have opportunities to develop new skills?

**Instructions**

☐ Are the expectations clear?

☐ Does the trainee understand the criteria for success?

**Support**

☐ Does the trainee know whom they can approach for help?

☐ Do they have regular meetings with the mentor?

**Participation**

☐ Does the trainee feel part of the team?

☐ Do they understand the value of their contribution?

**7. The trainer's role in delivering the module**

The trainer should guide participants towards the understanding that inclusion does not depend solely on personal attitudes; organisational processes can support or restrict inclusion; and a good mentor plans the environment rather than only responding to problems.

Analysing real situations from participants' companies is an appropriate method for this module.

**8. Assessment of Module 4**

**Reflection questions:**

To what extent does our workplace enable people who experience disabilities or other barriers to participate in learning?

Which processes could be structured more clearly?

What invisible barriers might exist?

What would I change in the onboarding process for a new trainee?

**Expected Outcomes of Module 4**

Upon completing the module, participants:

✓ understand the workplace as a learning environment;

✓ can structure professional tasks as a learning process;

✓ can create an inclusive onboarding process;

✓ recognise organisational barriers;

✓ design a more accessible and supportive environment for all trainees.

# MODULE 5

# THE MENTOR AS A LEADER OF INCLUSION

# AND AN ETHICAL PROFESSIONAL

## 1. Aim of the Module

The aim of this module is to strengthen the understanding of the mentor as a central figure in building an inclusive organisational culture within companies participating in dual VET.

Within the dual VET system, the mentor's role extends beyond supporting the acquisition of professional skills. Through their everyday behaviour, mentors influence:

- the way the team perceives differences;
- attitudes towards trainees;
- the level of participation of people with different needs;
- the organisation's willingness to invest in each person's development.

The main message of the module is:

Inclusion is not achieved through procedures and rules alone. It is built through everyday professional actions and decisions.

## 2. Methodological guidelines for the trainer

The trainer begins the module with the following question:

"When a trainee leaves your organisation after completing their training, what would you like them to remember: only the skills they acquired, or also the way you treated them and responded to the disability or barriers they experienced?"

The aim is to help participants understand that mentoring has two dimensions:

**Professional dimension:**

acquiring skills;

completing tasks;

meeting standards.

**Human and organisational dimension:**

belonging;
respect;
trust;
confidence.



## 3. The mentor as an ethical professional

### 3.1. The mentor's ethical responsibility

Every day, mentors make decisions that influence the trainee's development:

Which task will be assigned to the trainee?

How much time will be dedicated to them?

How will they be assessed?

How will they be introduced to the team?

How will they be supported when they experience difficulties?

These decisions are organisational, and they also have an ethical dimension.

**Main ethical principles of the inclusive mentor:**

**1. Equity**

The mentor ensures that trainees receive genuine opportunities for development.

This means:

access to meaningful tasks;

opportunities to learn from mistakes;

participation in team processes.

**2. Respect for Individuality**

Every trainee should be regarded as a person with:

abilities;

potential;

opportunities for development.

A disability or a need for support should not become the main characteristic by which the person is assessed.

**3. Responsibility for Creating Opportunities**

An inclusive mentor should not wait for the trainee to find their own place within the team. The mentor should actively create conditions in which the trainee is accepted and encouraged to participate.

**Practical Exercise**

"The Mentor's Decision"

**Aim:**

To understand the ethical dimension of everyday mentoring decisions.

**Case study:**

A digital agency is working on an important client project.

The mentor needs to decide whom to involve.

One trainee:

has more experience;

works quickly;

rarely makes mistakes.

The other trainee:

needs more support;

works more slowly;

demonstrates a strong interest and desire to develop.

**Questions:**

Whom would you choose?

What are the short-term and long-term consequences of this decision?

How can an opportunity be created for both trainees?

How can the mentor balance productivity and learning?

**Conclusion:**

In dual VET, the mentor does more than decide who will complete a task. The mentor also decides who will receive an opportunity to develop.

**4. The mentor as an influence on organisational culture**

Organisational culture is built through everyday practices.

Even the strongest inclusion policies will be ineffective if the team does not accept differences; trainees feel like "temporary assistants"; and mistakes are punished instead of being treated as opportunities for learning.

The mentor influences organisational culture through:

**Language**

The way we speak about trainees shapes expectations.

**The difference:**

❌ "This person has limitations."

✔ "This person has specific needs and strengths that should be supported."

**Behaviour**

When the mentor:

involves the trainee in meetings;

asks for their opinion;

recognises their contribution;

the team receives the following message:

This person is a valued member of the professional community.

**5. Sustainability of inclusive practices**

Inclusion should not depend solely on one motivated mentor.

To remain sustainable, it needs to become part of the organisation.

**Elements of a sustainable system:**

**1. Shared Standards**

The organisation should have a clear understanding of:

what inclusive mentoring means;

how trainees are supported;

how success is measured.

**2. Exchange Among Mentors**

Mentors should have opportunities to:

share difficulties;

exchange solutions;

discuss case studies.

**3. Continuous Development**

Inclusion is not achieved through a single training programme.

It requires reflection; adaptation; and learning from practice.

**Tool for the Mentor**

**Personal Inclusive Mentoring Plan**

Each participant defines their own commitment:

**1. What will I change in my practice?**

.....

**2. How will I ensure more equitable access to tasks?**

.....

**3. How will I improve my communication?**

.....

**4. How will I support a culture of inclusion within my team?**

.....

**6. The trainer's role in delivering the module**

The trainer should encourage participants to move from:

"This is the responsibility of the system."

towards:

"I play an everyday role in creating this system."

It is important to emphasise the following:

The mentor cannot resolve every structural problem alone, but their actions can:

reduce barriers;

build trust;

increase opportunities for participation.

**7. Final assessment of the programme**

At the end of the training, the trainer can use a combination of the following:

**1. Self-assessment**

Participants assess their own development.

**Before the training:**

How did I understand the mentor's role?

**After the training:**

What will I change?

**2. Practical Case Study**

Participants develop a solution to the following situation:

"A trainee with different needs joins a digital team. How will you structure the first four weeks of their inclusion?"

**3. Personal Action Plan**

Each mentor identifies:

one change in their communication;

one change in the way tasks are organised;

one change in the support they provide.

**8. Overall outcomes of the training programme**

Upon completing the programme, mentors will be able to:

✓ design an inclusive working and learning environment;

✓ provide equitable access to professional development;

✓ recognise and reduce bias;

✓ use communication as a tool for inclusion;

✓ create a psychologically safe environment;

✓ support trainees with different needs;

✓ act as leaders of inclusion within their organisations.

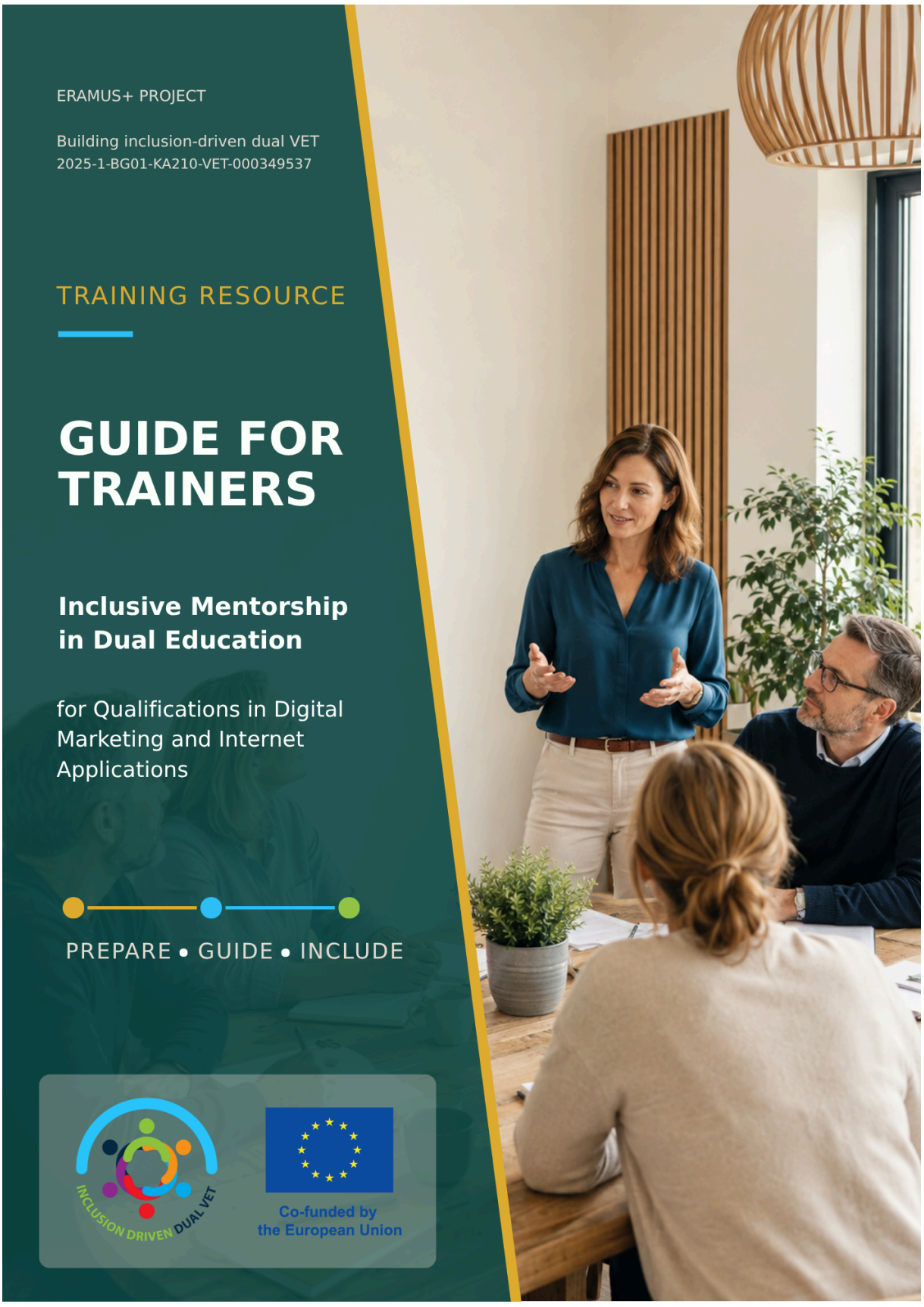


**Conclusion**

Inclusive dual VET requires a change in the mentor's role. In the modern digital economy, a mentor does more than show someone how to complete a particular task. The mentor is a professional who creates the conditions in which another person can develop their potential.

High-quality mentoring combines two aims: maintaining high professional standards and providing every trainee with genuine opportunities to participate.

This balance turns dual VET into a tool for acquiring professional skills and achieving sustainable social and economic inclusion.




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