

# Empowering Career Development through Mentoring - Reflections on Mentoring for Aspiring Decision-Makers

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# Introduction



## What is Mentoring?

Mentoring is a powerful **personal development and empowerment tool**. It is partnership between two people (mentor and mentee) normally working in a similar field or sharing similar experiences. It is a helpful relationship based upon mutual trust and respect.

## Identifying the need for a Mentoring Programme: the national and EU context

Mentoring is advocated for by the European Commission in order to “*support the advancement of talent but are particularly effective in the development of leadership skills*”<sup>1</sup>. At a local level, mentoring as a strategy has been used and recognised as a successful and effective methodology to assist the identified mentee in progressing at a fast track pace. This has in fact been a strategy advocated for by the Maltese Mentoring Society<sup>2</sup>, the University of Malta which offers the opportunity of mentoring through its Mentoring Programme,

as well as by Malta Enterprise which aims to assist businesses. The civil service has also followed suit with the launch of a mentorship programme for “*public officers who have the ambition and aspiration to develop their career with the Public Administration*”<sup>3</sup>.

## NCPE’s Mentoring Programme for Women

*The national situation: the basis for the development of NCPE’s Mentoring Programme*

The concept of NCPE’s Mentoring Programme was developed in 2012. This concept was designed on the basis of the existing labour market distortion in relation to the representation of men and women in decision-making positions in employment. Women in Malta are largely unrepresented in boardrooms and in decision-making positions within the labour market. In fact, statistical evidence as at 2012 confirmed that 78.5% of ‘legislators, senior officials and managers’ in Malta were men<sup>4</sup>. In addition, none of the presidents (chairpersons of the board of directors), and just 3% of the

1. European Commission, 2010. More Women in Senior Positions – Key to Economic Stability and Growth, page 40.

2. <http://www.maltesementoringsociety.com>

3. OPM Circular No. 17/2012 – Mentorship Programme. (May 2012)

4. National Statistics Office, 2012. Labour Force Survey, Q4/2011.

members of the board of directors of the largest quoted companies in Malta, were women<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, Malta had the lowest percentage of women in the National Parliament (9%) across all the European Member States<sup>6</sup>. Furthermore, at the time, Malta was the only Member State where no Member of the European Parliament was female<sup>7</sup>. Statistical data regarding female candidature in the Local Council<sup>8</sup> elections showed that the average rate for women candidates in Malta and Gozo over the previous three local council elections (i.e. 2009, 2012 and 2013) was 22.9%. In Gozo, the average rate was slightly higher at 23.8%. As per NSO statistics<sup>9</sup>, 15.5% women contested the 2013 general elections, resulting in a 5% increase over the 2008 general election.

Official data on the number of women on boards of government officially appointed bodies<sup>10</sup> illustrated that only 23% were women. It is noteworthy that the majority of the women on boards were appointed as secretaries (46% women and 54% men) with only low percentages in higher ranking scales e.g. 23% of the Members were women; 17% of the Deputy Chairpersons and only 16% of the Chairpersons were women.<sup>11</sup>

## Gender-balanced representation in Decision-Making Positions

### Malta

Despite women outnumbering men in their educational achievement at a tertiary level in Malta<sup>12</sup>, women are still by far under-represented in decision-making positions in employment. This gender imbalance entails that: “women have fewer opportunities than men to advance in their careers and that women’s skills are not being used to their full potential. This represents a loss for the women themselves and for the wider economy.<sup>13</sup>”

On the other hand, ‘*Ensuring Better Utilisation of the Economy’s Labour Potential, in particular that of Women... and Improving the Skills Base of Labour Force*’ is one of the national priorities towards productivity and growth<sup>14</sup>. This commitment was also reiterated in the **2012 Budget** whereby the Government aimed at the “better use of human resources, with greater participation in the labour market<sup>15</sup>”. To this end, the Mentoring Programme sought to enhance

5. European Commission, 2012. Largest Quoted Companies. Data collected between 15/01/2012-31/01/2012. Last retrieved on 23rd May 2012 on: [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-decision-making/database/business-finance/quoted-companies/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-decision-making/database/business-finance/quoted-companies/index_en.htm)

6. European Commission, 2012. National Parliaments. Data collected between 16/02/2012-22/02/2012. Last retrieved on 24th May 2012 on: [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-decision-making/database/politics/national-parliaments/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-decision-making/database/politics/national-parliaments/index_en.htm)

7. European Commission, 2012. European Parliament (members by country). Data collected between 22/02/2012-22/02/2012. Last retrieved on 24th May 2012 on: [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-decision-making/database/politics/eu-parliament/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-decision-making/database/politics/eu-parliament/index_en.htm)

8. <http://www.electoral.gov.mt/pageview.aspx?x=%2bhwntRj%2bVUCqLJS47FcioWYSlv1vKnY0PdGZ2%2bmyMKxfOy%2bgxVbS9Rd-CvG2d3lwFSa1vb3%2b6fB%2fG03l%2f%2fidyrrwonWVCVhntKYXOZysTljqe1zMZVxPg%3d%3d>

9. [http://www.nso.gov.mt/statdoc/document\\_file.aspx?id=3547](http://www.nso.gov.mt/statdoc/document_file.aspx?id=3547)

10. <http://gov.mt/en/Government/Government%20of%20Malta/Ministries%20and%20Entities/Officially%20Appointed%20Bodies/Pages/Boards/1-0AB-Boards.aspx>

11. Data as at 12th March 2012

12. University of Malta, Office of the Registrar. Graduate Statistics by Faculty/Institute, Course & Route 2010/2011.

13. European Union, 2012. Women in Economic Decision-Making in the EU: Progress Report – A Europe 2020 Initiative, page 9.

14. Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment, April 2011. Malta’s National Reform Programme under the Europe 2020 Strategy, page 14.

15. Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment, November 2011. Budget Speech 2012, page 9.

the utilisation of the labour potential of everyone by addressing the under-representation of women in decision-making positions. The Mentoring Programme for women who aspire to hold decision-making positions was designed with the aim of improving the skills and further empower women to participate in decision-making positions and thus make use of their skills and their full potential.

Moreover, an increase in the participation of women in the labour market is a national priority<sup>16</sup> on which various initiatives have been carried out<sup>17</sup>. Nonetheless, one of the obstacles to achieving this national objective is “a tradition where women, particularly those having young children, generally opt not to work and remain at home to look after their children<sup>18</sup>”. Studies at a local level also confirm that caring responsibilities are a challenge not only for women to participate in the labour market, but also for women to participate in decision-making positions<sup>19</sup>. The **NCPE Unlocking the Female Potential Research Report**<sup>20</sup> states that one of the barriers women encounter to advance in their career is that of the ‘sticky floor’ phenomenon where they are stuck in jobs with no opportunities for promotions. The research indicates that policies targeted towards effective job evaluation systems where jobs are evaluated and compared on the basis of skill, and physical and mental effort, will work

towards an equitable working environment. The same research goes on to show that discrimination against women that results in lower pay and fewer advances in wages when compared to men is considered as a barrier forming the glass ceiling, as are opportunities for promotion and training that favour men; and states that including women at management and senior level positions is considered best practice for success in business and therefore should be implemented and communicated to all employees especially in the higher echelons of the organisation.

Besides, one of the priorities mentioned in the **Pre-Budget Document 2012** in order to enhance economic growth, was to continue “*creating the right conditions for people to make their choices, achieve their potential and excel*”<sup>21</sup>. In addition, gender mainstreaming and gender equality also entail the promotion of gender balanced representation within the sphere of decision-making in the labour market, in political parties, in the local and national administrations, as well as in Malta’s representations in European and international institutions. Being entrusted with assisting in, and reviewing, the implementation of a gender mainstreaming strategy in the public administration<sup>22</sup>, NCPE works to promote the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into all spheres of government action.

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16. This is evident in documents such as the Budget Speech 2012 and the Malta’s National Reform Programme under the Europe 2020 Strategy by the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment.

17. Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment, November 2011. Budget Speech 2012, pages 30-34.

18. Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment, April 2011. Malta’s National Reform Programme under the Europe 2020 Strategy, page 30.

19. These studies include: Obstacles to the Participation of Women in Decision-Making Positions by the National Statistics Office (2007) on behalf of the National Council of Women, and Unlocking the Female Potential Research Report by the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (2011).

20. National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE), 2012. Unlocking the Female Potential Research Report, page 34

21. Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment, August 2011. Pre-Budget Document 2012, page 32.

22. OPM Circular No.15/2012 – Gender Mainstreaming in Practice.

## *EU and International Context*

Apart from being a national priority, achieving gender balanced representation in decision-making posts is also a main concern at EU and international levels.

In effect, equality in decision-making is one of the priority areas of the **Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015** by the European Commission<sup>23</sup>. The European Commission states that “much remains to be done” to achieve gender balance in political participation<sup>24</sup>. In light of this, key actions by the European Commission in this regard will “consider targeted initiatives to improve the gender balance in decision making” and to “support efforts to promote greater participation by women in European Parliament elections including as candidates”<sup>25</sup>.

In an effort to counter this labour market distortion at management levels, the European Parliament Members backed calls for quotas in March 2012 with the aim of placing more women into company boardrooms should member states be deemed too slow to act. The EU Commission stated that it wants the proportion of female board members in big companies to rise to 40% by 2020, from the current average of 12%. Furthermore, the Commission said that it may legislate to make quotas compulsory<sup>26</sup>. When Commissioner

Viviane Reding, Vice-President of the European Commission, launched the “Women on the Board Pledge for Europe” and following its presentation at the Council of Ministers for Employment and Social Affairs of 1<sup>st</sup> December 2011, Ministers from a number of Member States actively supported this initiative and encouraged national listed companies to make more efforts to increase women’s representation on their boards by signing the Pledge<sup>27</sup>. Ms Reding called for European countries to set themselves a target of women making 30% of board members by 2015, and 40% by 2020<sup>28</sup>.

The **European Pact for Gender Equality** (2011-2020) reaffirms the need for gender equality in all spheres and acknowledges that gender equality in the European Union is vital to economic growth, prosperity and competitiveness<sup>29</sup>. One of the measures to close gender gaps and combat gender segregation in the labour market within this Pact is to “promote the equal participation of women and men in decision-making at all levels and in all fields, in order to make full use of all talents<sup>30</sup>”. It is with this in mind that the NCPÉ Mentoring Programme was designed, so that the skills and competencies of all men and women are utilised to the full potential.

Moreover, inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making is also one of the Critical Areas of Concern

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23. COM (2010) 491 final.

24. COM (2010) 491 final. Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015, page 7.

25. COM (2010) 491 final. Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015, pages 7,8.

26. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17357954>

27. European Union, 2012. Women in economic decision-making in the EU: Progress Report - A Europe 2020 initiative, page 5.

28. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2012/mar/04/women-europe-plans-boardroom-quotas>

29. European Pact for Gender Equality. Council Conclusions on the European Pact for Gender Equality for the period 2011-2020, page 3. (3073th Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council Meeting, Brussels, 7 March 2011)

30. European Pact for Gender Equality. Council Conclusions on the European Pact for Gender Equality for the period 2011-2020, page 4. (3073rd Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council Meeting, Brussels, 7 March 2011)

of the **Beijing Platform for Action**<sup>31</sup>. This Platform for Action, that was adopted in 1995, is an agenda for women's empowerment that sets out two objectives in this area of concern, namely to "take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making" and to "increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership"<sup>32</sup>. Malta has undertaken to take measures in line with the Beijing Platform of Action, one of which was the setting up of the NCPE itself.

After 15 years of the adoption of this agenda, the European Union carried out a thorough review of the developments undertaken and further encouraged governments, political parties and social partners "to further develop and implement effective measures for increasing women's engagement and participation in decision-making and leadership, including training and mentoring schemes and other initiatives for encouraging women to participate in political processes"<sup>33</sup>. This commitment is clearly reflected in the design of NCPE's Mentoring Programme.

Moreover, the **UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women** urges Malta: "to intensify its efforts to strengthen women's representation in leadership roles and in decision-making positions in political bodies, including Parliament and local councils, in public administration, including the diplomatic service,

and in the private sector. It recommends that the State party expand its current awareness-raising efforts and training activities to a wider range of stakeholders"<sup>34</sup>.

Additionally, more than half the students graduating from Europe's universities are women, and by not including them in decision-making positions, female talent would be underutilised and the quality of appointments may be compromised.<sup>35</sup>

## The aims of NCPE's Mentoring Programme

NCPE's Mentoring Programme was designed to assist women and further empower them with the skills required in decision-making positions.

One of the main aims of the Mentoring Programme is to sustain this targeted initiative towards enhancing a gender balanced representation in decision-making positions. The Mentoring Programme was also designed with the aim of empowering more women to run for office in the political sphere, thus facilitating and promoting women's active citizenship. This is in fact directly linked with the European Commission's decision to hold 2013 as the European Year of Citizens<sup>36</sup>. By providing the skills through the Mentoring Programme, the mentees will be able to engage as active citizens and endow them with stronger career prospects, hence leading towards a more gender-balanced democracy.

31. Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women. Last retrieved on 24th May 2012 on <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/decision.htm>

32. Ibid

33. Beijing +15. The Platform for Action and the European Union. Report from The Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, page 130.

34. CEDAW/C/MLT/CO/4. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Forty-seventh session, October 2010. Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention, pages 6,7.

35. European Union, 2012. Women in economic decision-making in the EU: Progress Report - A Europe 2020 initiative, page 7.

36. <http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/european-year-of-citizens-2013>

NCPE's Mentoring Programme was designed as a pro-active action targeting such areas of concern.

Whilst NCPE considers the introduction of quotas and other measures as a possible contributions to increasing the participation of women in decision-making positions, it needs to be emphasised that the introduction of quotas alone will not be successful to empower more women to contest elections, be appointed to senior positions in the public and private sectors or to assume decision-making positions in the labour market and elsewhere. Hence, besides continuing to attempt to raise greater awareness of the need to achieve a just and fair gender balance in politics and in the economy, action is required that challenges gender stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes towards women in power, alongside measures and support structures that facilitate a wider participation of persons with caring responsibilities.

All these initiatives will contribute to enhance equal opportunities for men and women in decision-making positions. In effect, through the implementation of the Mentoring Programme, NCPE also strived to raise awareness on the importance of gender-balance in decision making.

The importance of achieving this balance is shown by, amongst others, the fact that studies from various countries illustrate that companies with a higher share of women at top levels – that is, with the most gender-diverse management teams – deliver stronger organisational and financial performance than other companies.<sup>37</sup> NCPE, through its initiatives such as the Mentoring Programme, strives to promote

the various benefits of diversity among employees and board members. These include enhanced quality of decision-making through the boosting of creativity and innovation resulting from the addition of complementary knowledge, skills and experience, where decisions are based on evaluating more alternatives compared to homogenous boards.<sup>38</sup>

The Mentoring Programme aims at not only empowering more women to participate in decision-making positions in the labour market, in local and national administrations, as well as in Malta's EU and International Representations, but also at raising awareness. Furthermore, as part of the Mentoring Programme, training to mentees was developed with the aim of enhancing their skills to take up decision-making positions, thus promoting a better use of the talent pool in Malta.

The Mentoring Programme, which is a rather innovative activity for Malta in the field of empowering women in taking up decision-making positions, sought to facilitate the development of a foundation to address the gender imbalance in these roles. An increase in the female participation rate is possible through the long-term effect of comprehensively addressing the current labour market distortion in relation to women in decision-making positions. The wider the spectrum of female representation within the different sectors and levels of business, the more role models will be available.

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37. European Union, 2012. Women in economic decision-making in the EU: Progress Report - A Europe 2020 initiative, page 7.

38. Ibid

# CHAPTER 1:

## The design of NCPE's Mentoring Programme



Upon identification of the need for such a Programme, NCPE planned out the design of the Programme over a two-year period:

### The Information Session

In the first attempt to raise awareness and to provide information on the Mentoring Programme, NCPE organised two Information Sessions<sup>39</sup>; one for potential mentors and one for potential mentees. The idea to organise two separate sessions instead of one was for NCPE representatives to be able to tailor-make the message it wanted to convey to targeted audiences. This was especially important in light of the fact that whilst commitment is required from both parties, the duties, roles and responsibilities, and the benefits to be gained were different.

During the Information Sessions, the participants were informed on what it means being a mentor and a mentee. The benefits of such a Programme were relayed and the eligibility and selection process was clearly explained. The commitment factor was emphasised given that mentoring is most effective when carried out over a long span of time, with dedication, commitment and professionalism.

The mentees were informed that upon selection they will be assigned to a mentor. In total, the NCPE Mentoring Programme catered for thirty mentors, each mentor having one mentee.

In order to ensure that both parties were committed to making this a successful venture, both parties would be required to sign a Letter of Agreement. The total number of hours of mentoring eligible from the NCPE Mentoring Programme is of 96 hours. It was explained that a schedule can be drawn up between the mentor and the mentee to ensure that they are both comfortable with the number of hours to be done per week / per month. NCPE did not restrict the participants with such schedules and allowed for flexibility so the timetable could be decided upon by both parties according to their exigencies.

It was also important for NCPE to encourage the attendees of the Information Session to consider taking part in the Mentoring Programme, so the attendees were given a few tips for effective mentoring. Firstly, the mentors and mentees were encouraged to establish some rules regarding their mentoring agreement, and more importantly, set their desired outcomes such as performance goals. The attendees were reminded that one of the key reasons as to why mentoring might not be as successful as originally hoped for is that

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39. The information sessions were organised on 14th November 2014.

there would be a fundamental misunderstanding about their expectations. It was also stressed that agreeing on dates when the mentoring sessions can take place, and keeping to these committed dates, is of crucial importance. A successful mentoring relationship is one of mutual trust and respect. Finally, the attendees were reminded that over time, the mentoring relationship will most likely become slightly less formal. Whilst this is a natural process and mentees may benefit from this, it is also important to understand that the mentor is there to guide and advise the mentee so an element of formality and, more importantly, professionalism needs to be maintained throughout the Programme.

The Information Session served as an important tool not only for NCPE to be able to provide the necessary information, but to also directly answer any queries which the potential applicants had. In fact, attendees of the session were given the opportunity to ask questions during the session itself, and NCPE staff made themselves available after the session as well.

## Call for Applications

The Call for Applications was officially launched during the Information Sessions. In order to maximise the call, an advert was published on all the local newspapers<sup>40</sup> as well as on the Government Gazette<sup>41</sup>. Moreover, flyers, posters and brochures were developed and disseminated with NGOs, University, MCAST and ITS students, student organisations and the Employment and Training Corporation. NCPE, along with NCPE's partners on this initiative, i.e. Agenzija Zghazagh and MCWO, used social media to further disseminate this call for applications. In a bid to ensure that all the cohorts were made aware of this call, a radio advert was also developed and aired.

### *Eligibility and Selection Criteria*

Since the NCPE Mentoring Programme was designed for a specific purpose, the eligibility criteria was also designed to ensure that the right cohorts would participate in the Programme thereby maximising the success of the Mentoring Programme.

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40. The adverts appeared on the Sunday newspapers of 16/11/2014.

41. The advert appeared on the Government Gazette on 14/11/2014.

## Eligibility Criteria for Mentees

Mentees	Group 1	Group 2
<b>Sex</b>	Woman	Woman
<b>Age</b>	18 - 29	25+
<b>Education</b>	At least having completed 3 years of post-secondary education	At least having completed an MCAST course (of duration of at least 3 years full-time) or a University Diploma or Degree (of duration of at least 3 years full-time)
<b>Minimum MQF Level</b>	3	5
<b>Scope</b>	To help students or women who are at the beginning of their careers	To help women who work in junior and middle management positions to attain positions of decision-making

## Eligibility Criteria for Mentors

At least 7 years working experience, holding a decision-making position in the area of politics, management, NGO/ Civil Society, business, education, or any other relevant area
Be willing to provide 96 hours or mentoring sessions
Be dedicated and committed to the Programme

Moreover, in the application form, mentors were also requested to highlight the below criteria:

- Previous experience in mentoring, if any
- Highlight expertise and skills
- The establishment of an effective and efficient mentoring action plan
- Work experience in a decision-making position
- The type of mentoring that will be provided to the mentee in order to create a dynamic and interactive relationship (e.g. job-shadowing, one-to-one meetings, invite the mentee to attend meetings and/or conferences)

# The Training Programme

A Training Programme<sup>42</sup> was offered to eligible potential mentees. The sessions were designed with the aim of helping women develop the skills required to occupy decision-making skills. NCPE offered this training to all eligible applicants (potential mentees) because of the immense benefits which such a training programme could provide. The five-day programme focused on:

<b>Topic 1: Communication Skills for leaders</b>
<b>Learning Outcomes:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Knowledge on the value and techniques of effective listening and advanced empathy</li><li>• Knowledge on the usefulness of effectively giving and receiving feedback to enhance and manage performance of self and others</li><li>• Understanding the importance of clear articulation and the art of persuasion</li><li>• Skills of listening attentively and responding empathically</li><li>• Skills of giving and receiving feedback</li></ul>

<b>Topic 2: Self-Confidence and Assertiveness</b>
<b>Learning Outcomes:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learn how to portray self-confidence and use assertive dialogue within their day-to-day interactions with others</li></ul>

<b>Topic 3: Critical Thinking for Decision-Making Skills</b>
<b>Learning Outcomes:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Knowledge of the impact of higher order thinking on the quality and effectiveness of leadership</li><li>• Understanding the importance of critical thinking in getting to the root of problems and developing reasonable solutions</li></ul>

<b>Topic 4: Emotionally Intelligent Leadership</b>
<b>Learning Outcomes:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Knowledge on the concept of Transformational Leadership</li><li>• Knowledge on the concept of Emotional Intelligence</li><li>• Knowledge on the usefulness of emotional intelligence for transformational leaders</li><li>• Skills of leading by example; creating an inspiring vision; being a role model; self-awareness; self-regulation; motivation; empathy</li></ul>

<b>Topic 5: Meeting local leaders; Assessment and Evaluation</b>
<b>Learning Outcomes:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Facing challenges through the experience of female leaders in our society</li></ul>

42. The training programme ran from 2nd - 6th February 2015 and was delivered by Outlook Coop.

A brief assessment was carried out on the final day in order to evaluate the participants' experience and knowledge gained. Additionally, several distinguished professional women were invited to speak to the group of potential mentees. This proved to be fruitful as the potential mentees were given the opportunity to ask the questions which they would not have had the opportunity to ask had they not been part of the training programme. The professional women speakers included MEPs, businesswomen and CEOs. The attendees were also awarded with a certificate of attendance. Overall, positive feedback was received by the trainees who stated that:

"It was one of the best learning experiences I've had so far. Very motivational and empowering"  
"There should be more sessions of the sort within society"  
"...very motivational and instilled many new ideas and solutions on how to approach realistic work and social situations, which have inspired me to discover myself and work on my faults to provide a better service."

## The Selection Process

### *Mentees*

The assessment for the mentees focused on their willingness and long-term goals to participate in such a Programme. In fact, the mentees were requested to write a motivation letter explaining what they hope to achieve through this programme and why it is important for them to have a mentor. The wish of the mentees' to occupy a decision-making role was also assessed and voluntary work was considered an asset as it shows the applicants' dedication and commitment. It was important for NCPE to note that the applicants' wishes for mentoring are in line with this particular Mentoring Programme, thereby contributing to the final aim of increasing the number of women in decision-

making posts and reducing / eliminating labour market distortions. It should be noted that NCPE had sufficient resources for thirty chosen mentees, however there was no set limit as to how many are to be chosen for Group 1 and for Group 2, thereby rendering the selection process more fair.

### *Mentors*

The selection criteria for mentors was more rigorous for the simple reason that NCPE needed to ensure that the mentors are up to standard and fit in the concept of the NCPE Mentoring Programme. In view of this, the mentors were scored based on:

- whether they had any previous experience in mentoring,
- the feasibility of the mentoring strategy which they proposed in their application form,
- their commitment to 96 hours of mentoring
- the type of mentoring they would be offering, e.g. job-shadowing, meetings etc..
- their work experience in decision-making posts and at top decision-making levels

Due to the nature and the objectives of the NCPE Mentoring Programme, women received an additional score so as to encourage the participation of women role models.

## The Matching Process

A committee was set up by NCPE to assess the eligibility of the applicants and weight their selection scoring. Upon assessment of eligibility, the applicants were ranked so as to ensure fairness of who was chosen to be part of the Mentoring Programme. The Committee then had the onerous task of matching the mentees to their suitable mentors, based on what the mentees had expressed in their letter

of motivation. The mentees were free to request a mentor from a different sector than the one they were either studying for or working in. This was done so that the mentees were given the possibility to experience the real-life situations of the different sectors and be able to truly assess if they wanted to form part of that sector or not. The factors taken into consideration during the matching process were the areas of expertise and experience. In fact, the final score given to the mentors depended on the suitability of the match with the mentees who had applied. Following the evaluation, each mentee was assigned one mentor, to a total of thirty mentors matched with thirty mentees. The selected mentors and mentees were duly notified and invited to attend the Briefing Session.

## Briefing Session

The outcome of the matching process was stated publicly during an event organised for the applicants of the Mentoring Programme. The aim of the briefing session was to primarily introduce the mentees to their assigned mentors, and therefore utilise the briefing session as an ice breaker between the two parties. Secondly, the selected mentors and mentees were reminded of the documentation which needed to be kept and submitted to NCPE in order for NCPE to be able to monitor the mentoring sessions as much as possible.

The attendees were also provided with further points on how to ensure a successful mentor-mentee relationship, thereby reiterating the duties and level of commitment required from both parties. During the session, the mentors and mentees were provided with an indicative schedule of mentoring sessions so that they would be able to plan out the 96 hours accordingly. It is noteworthy that the

mentors and mentees were given the freedom to schedule more or less hours each month depending on their exigencies, as long as they remain within the global maximum number of hours. The participants were also informed that NCPE may carry out on-the-spot checks with the scope of not only verifying the mentoring sessions, but also to monitor the development and growth of the mentee.

As regards monthly documentation, the mentors were requested to submit signed attendance sheets whereas the mentees were responsible for signed timesheets as well as a journal of experiences.

This session led to the onset of the Mentoring Programme.

## Formalising the Agreement

The mentors and mentees who were selected were each given a Letter of Agreement. One of the main purposes of the Letter of Agreement was for the participants to declare their commitment to the Programme.

The Letter of Agreement outlined the terms of the agreement with regards to duration, type of service being provided, duties and obligations as well as the importance of confidentiality. In essence, the Agreement regulates the relationship between the mentor or mentee and NCPE. An important clause in the Agreement was the Termination Clause. NCPE is duty-bound to act cautiously and ensure that the standards are high at all times and that both parties are honouring their commitments as outlined in the Agreement.

# CHAPTER 2: The Mentoring Programme Publicity Campaign



## The aim of the Publicity Campaign

As part of the Mentoring Programme, NCPE planned on carrying out a marketing campaign with the aim of informing the general public about the Mentoring Programme, as well as to attract as many participants as possible.

The campaign was designed to fit the objectives of the Mentoring Programme;

- to address the gender distortion in the labour market: i.e the under-representation of women not only in the labour market in general but more specifically in decision-making positions, with the aim of increasing the number of women in decision-making positions
- to support the elimination of gender segregation from the workforce and subsequently empower and enable women to take up decision-making positions
- to enrich the Maltese labour market
- to help competent and skillful women to seek new job opportunities
- to tangibly support and advice policy makers on gender-balance in decision-making

The tangible outputs included a corporate image, a logo, a rollout stand, brochures and flyers, posters, as well as radio public

announcements and adverts on the top social networking site.

## Corporate Image

The concept for the corporate image was to have an identifiable public image which appealed to the relevant target groups of the Mentoring Programme. The main target groups identified were women aspiring to hold decision-making positions, and professional men and women occupying high-level jobs (who would potentially apply to become mentors). In view of this, it was decided that the corporate image of the Mentoring Programme was to have an executive look. The corporate identity needed to suit all aspects of the Mentoring Programme and of the publicity campaign. This was an important factor given that the publicity material was to be directed at different cohorts and thereby placed at different locations, e.g. targeting students at University and targeting professional people in various places of employment.

The colour scheme chosen was from the blue/grey spectrum, ranging from light teal to peacock blue, with a charcoal grey coordinate. The fonts to be used throughout the campaign were also selected for consistency purposes.

## Logo

For branding purposes, it was decided that besides the NCPE logo, a project logo would also be used on all of the publicity material which belonged to the Mentoring Programme. Given the various campaigns which are done by NCPE and other various entities, NCPE holds this aspect as a significant step since the targeted cohorts will have ease of reference when searching for the initiatives which they deem most of interest to them.



Logo

The logo was designed to be simple and easily identifiable. Utilising the colour scheme of the corporate image, the logo features a lens hovering over the words 'Gender Balance in Decision-Making'. The concept of the logo was the search for competent and skillful women in decision-making positions. The logo produced was deemed to be original, distinctive, effective, appropriate, practical and simple in form.

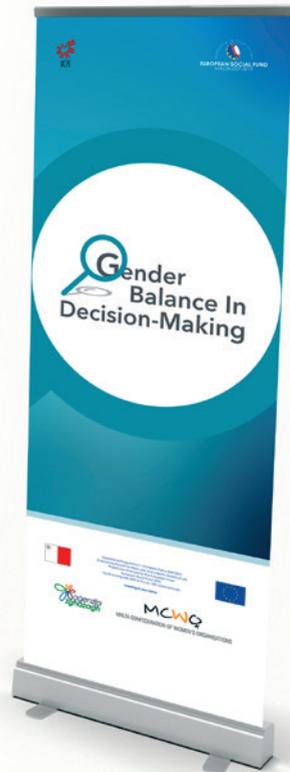
## Publicity Material

Upon development of the essential design elements, i.e. the corporate image and the logo, the publicity material could also be produced.

### *Roll-up Stand*

A roll-up stand was identified as an important publicity tool to be developed so as to strengthen the Mentoring Programmes presence in the eyes of those present at the various events.

In-keeping with the corporate image, the design of the roll-up stand was simple and featured the lens as is featured in the logo. The roll-up stand is used by the NCPE throughout the duration of the Mentoring Programme for the purpose of showing that the event forms part of the Mentoring Programme. In fact, the roll-up stand was designed to be positioned at the various events organised, namely the Information Session, the five-day Training Programme, the Briefing Session, the Seminar and the Final Conference.



Roll-Up

## *Mentoring Programme Brochures, Flyers and Posters*

The aim of designing brochures, flyers and posters was to inform and encourage the general public to participate in the Mentoring Programme. The main target groups were the potential mentors and two different groups of mentees (one group aged between 18-29 years old and have an MQF level 3 whereas the other group are aged 25 years and over with an MQF level 5). These publicity materials were disseminated among NGOs, University students, MCAST students, ITS students, student organisations, and the Employment and Training Corporation. Moreover, the Mentoring Programme was further promoted through email marketing, on newspapers as well as on the NCPE Facebook page and website.



Poster and Brochure



## Media Publicity

### *Radio Adverts*

Radio adverts were produced and aired with the aim of maximising the number of people who would potentially be interested in participating in the Mentoring Programme. The radio promotional campaign aired adverts in both the Maltese and English language on the five most popular local radio stations. The adverts aired 270 times during prime time.

### *Adverts on the top social network platform*

The Mentoring Programme was further promoted over the top social network platform, which in this case was Facebook. Online adverts were developed and these were targeted towards the Programme's cohort for two weeks. People who clicked on the adverts were re-directed to the NCPE official Facebook page whereby more information could be obtained.

The effectiveness of this publicity tool was measured through the number of likes garnered and views reached. During the two weeks of online adverts, the NCPE Facebook page increased its followers by 400 profiles and the posts which NCPE posted reached over 350 views, whilst there were over 2000 clicks on the adverts themselves.

### *Measuring the success of the Publicity Campaign*

Aside from the online interest generated through the online marketing, the ultimate true measure of the publicity campaign was the number of applications received for mentors and mentees. By the end of the application period, NCPE had received a total of 198 applications; 60 applications for mentees and 138 for mentors.

# CHAPTER 3: The Mentoring Programme; Mentors' and Mentees' Experiences



Throughout the Mentoring Programme, NCPE kept the lines of communication with the mentors and mentees as open as possible. This ensured constant monitoring of the participants and it also provided the participants with the opportunity of voicing any concerns they might have.

The main method of communication was through the documentation which the mentors and mentees submitted on a monthly basis. The documentation, i.e. the attendance sheet, the timesheet and the journal of experiences, provided NCPE with information about the progress of the mentoring relationship, as well as the benefit and growth mainly of the mentee.

The mentors and mentees also communicated with NCPE via email and over the phone. Following the first few months of mentoring, NCPE decided to organise a meeting for mentors. This was received well from the mentors who turned up and shared their experiences and even some of their concerns with each other. This meeting was fruitful as the mentors were providing each other with tips on what worked and what type of mentoring they found to be most beneficial. The mentors also noted that this was a good networking exercise between them and expressed their wish for further meetings, possibly even with all the mentees. A meeting was organised for mentees, however, this did not come to fruition as only a few mentees confirmed their attendance.

NCPE also carried out some on-the-spot checks at mentoring sessions. These checks were not only beneficial for NCPE for verification purposes but they also served the purpose of having close contact with the mentors and mentees who could discuss any of their concerns in person on a one-to-one basis with NCPE officials.

## Journal of Experiences

With each month, mentees were requested to submit their journal of experiences. This could be submitted directly to NCPE without having to show it to the mentor, thereby increasing the mentees' confidence at analysing what the mentoring sessions' short-term and long-term effects were.

The aim of keeping a journal was for the mentee to self-assess and self-reflect on the mentoring sessions. The mentee was encouraged to analyse the mentoring style used, the relationship with the mentor, the benefits gained from this mentoring experience, as well as reflect on the future whilst using the tools learnt from the Mentoring Programme.

These journals proved to be very valuable as most mentees truly provided an insight into their own observations and reflections regarding their growth and development over the duration of the Mentoring Programme.



Following a thorough review of these journals, it was imperative that such experiences are collated and published in this mentoring toolkit. The most recurring themes were extracted and are being reproduced mostly verbatim in this publication so as to be able to grasp the true experiences of the mentees who undertook the NCPE Mentoring Programme.

## Real-life Experiences of Mentees

### *Qualities of a good leader in a decision-making position*

Throughout the Mentoring Programme, many of the mentees observed their mentors and noted what qualities a good leader should have. In fact, through these observations, the mentees noticed that:

*“A point which I have observed and seen in practice thanks to job-shadowing is the importance of being calm, especially in challenging situations as well as being tough but fair in leadership.”*

Watching the mentor in action during job-shadowing sessions at the mentor’s place of work led to the mentees being able to observe the qualities of a good leader, which was described by one of the mentees as:

*“A leader must be able to take the right decisions with timeliness, and be able to delegate work so as to focus on the priorities of his/her niche.”*

Moreover, the mentees had the opportunity to analyse the relationship between the mentor and his/her employees, whilst noting that:

*“The skill of the leader is to evaluate the different situations his/her staff are going through and apply a leadership style that will support positively staff members.”*

Other mentees noted the fact that leadership skills was a topic which was discussed at length during the one-to-one sessions. The mentors and the mentees *“discussed what makes an individual a leader, what sets him/her apart as a manager and what it takes to be successful”*.

Another mentee described how she *“was instructed about the importance of using tact without compromising one’s principles in certain difficult work scenarios”*.

A mentee noted that *“Leaders must build trust in their team”*, which in fact was a point of interest for many other mentees as they reflected on what teamwork really means and what the benefits of good teamwork are.

## *The asset of Teamwork*

The concept of teamwork was a point of contention for some mentees because of some of their own experiences which may have led them to be disillusioned by the concept. However, the mentees saw the benefit of having a strong team and identified the need to foster good relations between staff so as to yield positive results for all. As one of the mentees noted:

*"I learned further on the importance of having a cohesive team of employees, and the need of positivity in everyone. The employees must be forward-looking, positive and doers. Negativity and lack of solutions are barriers to enabling things."*

The leadership factor when building a team was identified as being crucial if the team is to succeed. Having a successful team will most likely result in the team driving a successful company:

The importance of having a vision that is communicated, understood and owned by an entity was emphasised. A shared vision becomes the team's shared goal and objective. In fact, it is with this concept in mind that one of the mentees remarked on a quote by Phil Jackson which states that "The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team."

## *Time Management*

The issue of good time management was an issue which had already emerged during the training provided to mentees. Mentees had expressed concerns over the fact that their schedules were already busy and they feared that taking on a bigger responsibility at work might prove to be too much for them. The mentoring sessions provided the mentees with a

different perspective as they saw first-hand how the mentors managed their time and balanced work and family life. A mentee eagerly remarked:

*"I really look up to my mentor as she is very organised... It is very beneficial to set goals and do your best to achieve them by the end of the day."*

This was a topic which was discussed with the mentors and the mentors provided guidance to the mentees to be able to better schedule all the tasks in their lives. This guidance showed through results, as remarked by the mentees:

*"The goal of these sessions was to help me improve my effectiveness at managing time and to build coping mechanisms for managing stress."*

*"I am learning how to better organise my work to be able to accomplish better outcomes."*

## *Strengths and Weaknesses*

The mentees were often aided by the mentors to identify their own strengths and weaknesses so that they could increase their overall productivity and efficiency. Through the discussions during the one-to-one meetings, the mentors worked on increasing the mentees' confidence through constructive self-awareness of one's own strengths and weaknesses. This was a key factor to ensure the growth and development of the mentee. The mentees stated that:

*"During a one-to-one session with my mentor, we explored my strengths and weaknesses, and what I can offer."*

Without the guidance of my mentor, I would not be able to reflect and identify my weaknesses on how I can improve my confidence in meetings.

## Observation and Analysis

During the Mentoring Programme, the mentees often remarked that they are finally getting the chance to reflect; reflect on the mentoring sessions, reflect on themselves and their character traits, and reflect on their career paths. These observations came through in the journals of experience, and it is interesting to note that many of the mentees' journeys, despite being different, were somehow related through this Mentoring Programme. Some of the observations made were common for many mentees.

A selection of the observations made were about being different and seeing the positive in being different. As one mentee stated:

*"This taught me that being different may work in your favour as audiences need fresh ideas, giving them much of the same might not give any results."*

A mentee even viewed this from a pioneering perspective by understanding that the concept will yield results in the long-term:

*"Thinking outside of the box and persevering to push through with one's ideas and dreams is the way forward to success and to innovate oneself in any process possible."*

Further to a deep analysis, several mentees decided to take action and use the skills acquired during the Mentoring Programme to better themselves and their career prospects. One of the mentees understood the significance of being organised and planning ahead, as she remarked that:

*"Having the opportunity to work hands-on and in a guided environment on more logistical and financial matters of leading and managing has already given me the opportunity to understand in more detail the importance of planning ahead strategically and all the financial and logistical implications involved."*

Another mentee put the tools that were being acquired during the Mentoring Programme into good use as she took action during the mentoring sessions:

*"The Mentoring Programme provided me with the opportunity of self-reflection and big-picture-thinking. It helped me develop a career vision statement and also do career planning."*

Various mentees went through a process of self-awareness which, after a self-analysis, resulted in wanting to plan ahead so that they would continue to develop and progress even after the mentoring sessions are done.

*"Thanks to my mentor's guidance, I could reflect and do an honest appraisal on what my priorities should be so as to be able to find time for myself and regain the energy that I need especially to be an effective manager."*

*"I feel that this mentoring is an opportunity to become more empowered to move on to live a healthier lifestyle, to gain more confidence in my abilities and ultimately a more flourishing career. It has been an opportunity to reflect on the life I want to live."*

One of the mentees declared that the key to success in life is to believe in oneself, and

believe that even though there might be mistakes made along the way, it is how you deal and cope with them that is important in the long run:

*"I believe that to build my self-confidence in management I have to believe in myself. No one is perfect however I can do my best, learn from my mistakes and move on."*

Some mentees noticed that the skill-set acquired through the Mentoring Programme does not apply solely to one's career but the skills are transferrable onto other aspects of one's life:

*"These skills are also useful in helping me holistically as an individual with responsibilities at home and at my place of work."*

*"The transferable skills that I have accumulated so far have been instrumental in helping me clarify where I am, where I want to go, and why."*

The mentees noted that "The suggestions and advice given helped me see and act from a different perspective". The effect of the mentors' guidance was clearly explained by one of the mentees who proceeded with working on her self-confidence, thereby improving her career prospects:

*"The mentoring sessions have had an impact on my self-confidence as whereas I would previously decline an opportunity (such as public speaking) due to being too shy or feeling unprepared to do so, I now think of the positive impact this would have on me personally and as an opportunity to showcase my abilities."*

## *Qualities of a Good Mentor*

The descriptions of the mentors' style of mentoring by the mentees were noteworthy. Positive characteristics of a mentor included professionalism, flexibility and openness to share experiences. One of the mentees encapsulated what makes a good mentor perfectly by describing her own mentor throughout this Mentoring Programme as:

*"Throughout the weeks of the Mentoring Programme, I got to know my mentor better and can describe her as a loyal friend, confidante, advisor, coach and role model who represents accomplishment, knowledge, skill and virtue."*

Another mentee described her mentor as:

*"My mentor is very professional and knowledgeable and is always there to support me through his knowledge and encouragement especially when it comes to identify and analyse my weaknesses and strengths."*

The professionalism and experience of a mentor shines through when the mentors put aside their planned programmes for topics which might be on the mentees' minds. This style of mentoring was appreciated by the mentees, who remarked that:

*"I feel I always learn when I have these [mentoring] sessions, but what pleases me most is that even though the mentor always prepares herself well for the session, she is always very flexible to, if necessary, deviate from her plans and focus on particular issues that I might have, whether they are related to the topic or not."*

Due to the regular planned mentoring sessions, the relationship between the mentor and mentee could develop, which made it easier for mentors to advise their mentees and for mentees to take on board such advice:

*"During the past few days, I was passing through a difficult time at work. I had a lot of ups and downs and I had a lot of mixed feelings. My mentor made me realise that the things that were happening were only going to go to my advantage as I would be more knowledgeable in different areas."*

One of the mentees also noted the benefits of job-shadowing as she described that:

*"The method used by my mentor was a very engaging one, where real-life examples and experiences were used. The hands-on learning and job-shadowing has been really informative and fruitful."*

*"Job-shadowing gives me the opportunity to observe the dynamics of interaction between my mentor, her clients and others involved in the professional context."*

The mentor-mentee relationship was also a key factor in the mentoring experience. One of the mentees had an appreciation for this relationship they had built as it meant that they could both contribute to make this a successful mentoring experience:

*"I believe that I have established a successful mentoring relationship with my mentor and the key factors for this include creating a relationship of trust, clearly defining our roles and also responsibilities, establishing short-term and long-term goals, using open, supportive communication, and collaboratively solving problems."*

## *The Benefits of Mentoring and the Mentoring Programme*

For many mentees, this was their first mentoring experience. Therefore, understandably, going in to such a Programme they were slightly hesitant. Their hesitation eased with every session as was documented in their journals:

*"Following my first month of mentoring sessions, I am arriving to the conclusion that mentoring is an effective method of helping inexperienced individuals (like me) develop and progress in their profession or explore a new career."*

The progression of the Mentoring Programme, following discussions between the mentor and the mentee on the prospective goals and aims of the Programme, continued positively as the Programme was tailor-made to each mentee:

*"When I started on this Mentoring Programme, it never crossed my mind that I could also have the opportunity to meet my mentor's contacts, and of the possibility of personal employment opportunity. I am excited about all this and looking deeper into the options which might arise."*

The mentees embraced this opportunity which, although it was an additional task to their already demanding lifestyles, it proved to be beneficial for their overall well-being:

*"Although I was quite busy, I was always looking forward to my mentoring sessions as my mentor was always prepared with excellent tips to help me cope with my busy schedule."*

On the same note, another mentee recounted that:

*"This Mentoring Programme has provided me with a precious moment to halt from my daily activities, be absorbed in my thoughts in a reflective manner, and to access my own inner feelings. The ability to discern my own personal values, emotions and compassions is vital for my personal and career development."*

Subsequent to the first few mentoring sessions, the mentees were already recognising the positive aspects of the Mentoring Programme, as written in their journals:

*"This exposure is an eye-opener to factors which I would need to look out for and develop should I own my own business in the future."*

One of the mentees explained in more detail the beneficial aspects of having a mentor who was attentive to their observations:

*"During one-to-one meetings I had the opportunity to discuss any lessons which I learned during meetings attended and to amplify further on any theoretical concepts and/or practical ones pertinent to a particular meeting."*

Looking at the Mentoring Programme in a holistic manner, the mentees seemed grateful at the opportunity given to them as it translated into positive improvements of various aspects of their lives. The below are a few of the quotations extracted from the journals illustrating the mentees:

*"This was a great opportunity."*

*"I consider this as a great opportunity for me to work with such an experienced and professional person. With the help of my*

*mentor, I now have a very clear picture of where I want to arrive."*

*"My experience was very positive as I was made to feel very welcome. My mentor made sure I was able to follow and understand, whilst listening to my feedback."*

*"The Mentoring Programme helped me realise what I want to become and how I will achieve it."*

*"I must say this was a very valuable experience!"*

## **Empowerment**

The main aim of this Mentoring Programme was to empower and encourage women to identify what it is that they need to do to be able to occupy a decision-making role. By identifying such factors, they could then take the next step and take up such positions. This aim was entrusted to the mentors, who took on the role of empowerment and encouragement, and guided the mentees to realise their full potential. Sometimes such guidance needed to be in the form of affirmations towards the mentee, for example:

*"The fact that my mentor confirmed that I have the necessary qualities for a headship position is very encouraging."*

*"I need to believe in myself and as my mentor always tells me, I need to tell myself 'I can do this' and believe it. I need to acknowledge my accomplishments and realise that my qualifications will give me the credentials. And I need a positive attitude to take up the challenge and be able to move on in my career."*

In other cases, the mentor listened carefully to the mentee's concerns and offered professional advice:

*"My mentor encouraged me to find ways to speak to some of my colleagues and give them the chance to get involved in training. This will help me get my team members closer and develop them as well as help me balance my workload."*

For many mentees, the empowerment was gradual and upon realisation of all that they have accomplished throughout the Mentoring Programme:

*"I believe that personal and professional benefits gained from studying will give me a sense of satisfaction and achievement, improve my skills, offer me better opportunities whilst helping me to improve my confidence and self-esteem."*

*"During these sessions I am learning to appreciate life and what it brings with it, as the dedication that my mentor is putting into these sessions is making me a stronger person and a brighter one too."*

*"These sessions have helped me improve my personality as well as have a clearer idea on what I want to achieve in my career."*

The purpose for such a Mentoring Programme could be seen in the statements of some of the mentees who expressed their deep gratitude and appreciation at having had this opportunity:

*"My mentor has been amazing at encouraging me and gently teasing out positive elements in me. I go home feeling so positive about the career path that I*

*want to take and that most of all, I can do it!"*

*"As I reflect on my time spent during the Mentoring Programme, I realise how much I have grown and developed in my confidence, assertiveness, and most of all in balancing my various roles."*

*"On reflection, I believe that having been mentored was one of the most valuable opportunities I had in my 33 years career. I feel that having the guidance, encouragement and support of my professional mentor has led to an improved performance at work. I have increased my personal satisfaction and self-confidence, and worked to overcome my weakness especially my time management and communication skills. It has been an opportunity to reflect on my own practice."*

Such observations illustrate the desire of the mentees to work hard to attain a decision-making role in the future. Moreover, these journals have showed that there is a real need for mentoring. In fact, one of the mentees remarked that:

*"Following the conclusion of this Mentoring Programme, I am sure that I would not look back and will work towards introducing this concept of mentoring in our organisation."*

The fulfillment and the skills that mentoring provides are not to be understated and should be encouraged further.

# CONCLUSION: Challenges Encountered and Lessons Learned



Further to this being the first experience for NCPE organising a mentoring programme, there have been several experiences from which NCPE has gained valuable knowledge. The following is a summary of the lessons learned.

## Participation in the Programme

Upon issuing of the call, a good response was immediately received from those wishing to be mentors. The same cannot be said of those wishing to be mentees. The response was unfortunately slow, so much so that NCPE had to extend the deadline to ensure that there would be a good selection of potential mentees. In fact, 138 applications for mentors were received vis-à-vis 60 for mentees, out of whom 30 mentors and 30 mentees were chosen and matched. Whilst both the mentors and mentees were gaining the experience, a possible reason for this difference between mentors' and mentees' participation is the fact that the mentors were being remunerated for their services.

## Training

An important lesson learned concerns the training offered. In the beginning of the programme, training was offered to mentees. From feedback received, mentors also

expressed their wish to have received training at the beginning as this would have helped them during the process of mentoring. NCPE as well as the trainers have identified the importance of offering training on the difference between mentoring and coaching. The need for such training could also be extracted from the journals of experiences submitted by the mentees.

## Commitment by both parties

In the majority of cases, both mentors and mentees were committed to a successful mentoring experience. However, there have been a few cases reported whereby mentees did not seem to be fully committed. Mentors sometimes reported that mentees did not make themselves available for the sessions. In one case, NCPE had no other choice but to take action and terminate the mentee's contract. This was a last resort given that the mentee was not only not making herself available to her mentor, but even NCPE's attempts to contact her proved to be futile. The mentor was immediately assigned another mentee who was on the reserve list and was still willing to participate at that stage. In this context, having a reserve list of both mentors and mentees is a positive practice so as to ensure the smooth-running of such a programme.



## Networking

In the middle of the programme, NCPE organised a meeting between mentors and another meeting between mentees. The aim of such meetings was to meet up with the mentors and mentees and obtain their views regarding the ongoing of the programme. The meeting with the mentors was very successful, with a high participation from the mentors and a high input from their end. Mentors used this meeting to share their experiences between them as well as to share any problems being faced, thereby sharing tips on how to deal with tricky or difficult situations being faced. A similar meeting was organised for mentees however there was no participation and the meeting was therefore not held.

## The scope of the programme

The scope of this mentoring programme was targeted towards women in decision-making roles. If a similar programme is implemented in the future, the scope may be widened to include more targeted groups, subject to having a good background and justification for targeting the groups selected.

## Number of hours of mentoring

Following an internal analysis of the mentoring programme, it was also deduced that some mentees needed more mentoring hours than others. In view of this, it would be ideal if perhaps the option of different take-up of hours needed were to be introduced in future similar programmes. The hours needed could also be split between coaching and mentoring.

## Motivation for mentees

Given the low number of applications submitted as well as the wavering commitment during the programme, it would be ideal to analyse further what aspects would most motivate mentees to participate and fully-commit to such a programme. Therefore, it is being recommended that such an analysis is carried out prior to launching future mentoring programmes.

## Matching Exercise

A large majority of the mentors and mentees expressed their satisfaction at whom they were paired up with. Whilst the matching process was a laborious process, the benefits of such a process were reaped in the end.

The successful completion of NCPE's Mentoring Programme has provided all those involved with increased knowledge and experience. It has thus resulted in an invaluable experience for the mentors, mentees and even for NCPE. The main benefits extracted from this programme were clear throughout, mainly:

- Receiving guidance and support from a professional individual
- Being part of a professional network
- Having direct access to resources within the area of practice / expertise
- Receiving concrete knowledge on the factors required to have a successful career
- Increasing the possibilities of professional visibility and recognition

Concretely, there have also been some success stories showing that the mentees have used this experience to its full advantage by, for example, going in for interviews. Some were even successful in obtaining the job desired. The Mentoring Programme has been a positive experience and NCPE highly encourages that people participate in these programmes.



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### Partner Organisations



Operational Programme II – Cohesion Policy 2007-2013  
*Empowering People for More Jobs and a Better Quality of Life*  
Project part-financed by the European Union  
(European Social Fund (ESF)  
National Funds %15 ;EU Funds %85 ;Co-financing rate



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