

Sindbad - mentoring programme for young people

Wir schaffen Beziehung. Unsere Vision ist eine Gesellschaft, in der junge Menschen miteinander in Verbindung treten und gemeinsam Chancen ergreifen, unabhängig von ihrer sozialen Herkunft

Description

Sindbad is working throughout Austria to create a society in which all young people can freely decide on their first job and their future – where equal opportunities are practiced and solidarity and commitment to others are highly valued. Young people finishing compulsory schooling need to take the decision of their next step. Either they go to school for another four-five years or they apply for a job. As the support from their homes is often not enough, a personal mentor can help them going the next step.

Through a 1:1 mentoring programme, young people as mentees are guided into their professional future since 2016. The mentors, on the other hand, are young adults in the age of 20-35 years, developing social leadership skills and get an insight in a completely different world.

Beneficiaries

 **Discouraged and disengaged young people**

Countries

 **Austria**

Education level and sector

 **Lower secondary general education**

Mentees: finishing compulsory school

Mentors: young adults, either students or workers or employees

Level of implementation / Scope

 **Regional level**  **National level**

Since 2016 Sindbad accompanies young people via an 1:1 mentoring; by now it was developed in eight cities all over Austria.

Sindbad was originally established in 2016 in Vienna and spread across other parts of Austria in the following years (in 2020 for example to Tyrol).

Aims of policy/initiative

Sindbad aims to create meaningful one-to-one relationships that help young people navigate the key transition after compulsory schooling. The programme seeks to ensure that every young person, regardless of social background, can make informed choices about their educational or professional pathway. It supports equal opportunities by pairing mentees with committed young adult mentors who provide guidance, encouragement, and new perspectives. Through this, Sindbad works towards a more cohesive and equitable society where young people can seize opportunities with confidence.

Features and types of activities implemented

The main key feature of Sindbad is the relationship: big challenges and steps are easier if you go for it together. Apart from that principle, there are 4 key principles of the work of Sindbad:

- One-to-one match between each young person and a mentor: Each young person chooses their own mentor, with the personal introduction taking place during the programme kick-off.
- Regular meetings: Mentor and mentee meet on a regular basis to get to know each other, explore interests and talents, and plan concrete steps for a successful transition after compulsory schooling.
- Structured Sindbad modules: The Sindbad modules combine workshops, talks and leisure activities, offering space to exchange with other mentors and mentees and to continue personal development.
- Clearly defined programme duration: The programme runs in cohorts, with the autumn cycle running from November to November and the spring cycle from April to November.

Target group

The target group for mentees consists of pupils between 13 and 19 years old who are looking for an apprenticeship or further education. At Sindbad, pupils in their last year of compulsory schooling are assigned a mentor. Mentees gain a trusted person who is there for them, receive support in deciding how to continue their education or training after compulsory schooling, and benefit from exchange, encouragement and new perspectives for their future.

The target group for mentors consists of young people who are between 20 and 35 years old. Each mentor supports a young person for around one hour per week on their pathway to upper secondary school or an apprenticeship. Becoming a mentor offers several benefits. Mentors gain insight into the realities and life worlds of young people, build their own self-confidence and develop personally, and have the opportunity to connect with other committed and socially engaged young adults.

The programme also generates wider benefits for Austria as a whole. It contributes to a more equitable society with fairer opportunities, supports an open and caring social climate, and promotes diversity and inclusion across communities.

Resources

A total budget of €3 000 is allocated per mentoring team. This amount covers all material

and personnel costs for supporting one mentoring pair (one mentor and one mentee) over the course of one year.

Evaluation of the measure

Sindbad's quality assurance can be thematically divided into two parts.

On the one hand, there are measures and structures that directly affect the mentoring teams. This includes the selection and training of mentors and mentees, all tools for quality assessment, and the ombudsman's office. These topics are covered in the following section.

By December 2024, 7 001 young people had been reached through the Sindbad programme. By 2026, 10 000 people are expected to have participated in the programme.

Evidence of effectiveness of the measure

The relationship with a young adult (mentor) enables many young people (mentees) to develop ideas, gain a foothold, and move forward during this orientation year after compulsory schooling; ultimately, to embark on a career path that will be fulfilling in the long term.

[Annual reports](#) show that the mentoring model achieves consistently positive outcomes. By December 2024, 7 001 young people had been reached through the Sindbad programme, with around 600 mentoring teams active across 11 locations in Austria. Around 83% of mentees manage the transition into further education or training, 85% of mentoring teams complete the programme, and 90% of participants report satisfaction with the support received. Case examples from different regions illustrate successful transitions into apprenticeships or upper secondary schools, including targeted work with young people in over-company training and in rural areas, where in some cohorts completion and placement rates reached 100%. Testimonials from mentees highlight increased confidence, social skills, and sense of belonging, confirming the programme's impact on both educational and personal development.

Success factors

Key success factors include a clear focus on educational equity and long-term mentoring relationships between carefully matched mentors and mentees. The programme offers structured support through regular meetings, thematic workshops, and social activities, complemented by dedicated project staff at central and regional level. Innovations such as video-based matching, strengthened onboarding processes, and targeted mentoring offers for specific groups (for example apprentices not engaged in a specific company but in a national programme instead) help reduce drop out and improve the quality of matches.

Strong local partnerships with schools, municipalities, public employment services, and companies underpin outreach, recruitment, and sustainability. A mixed financing model that combines public funding, private donations, and income from training and consultancy services supports stability and further growth. Systematic use of feedback, alumni engagement, and regional networking events fosters continuous improvement and helps maintain a strong community around the programme.

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Source URL: <https://www26.cedefop.europa.eu/en/en/tools/neets/resources/sindbad-mentoring-programme-young-people>