RestART
EUROPE

Reflection Report

PR4.5

Project Title: Mentoring Second-chance Female Entrepreneurs to Restart the European Arts and Creative Sector
Erasmus+ Key Actions 2: Strategic Partnerships

PR4. Reflection Report

Project Website: https://www.restarteurope.org/

This publication was authored collectively by the members of the RestART Europe consortium.

Consortium Partners

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1. Introduction

This report is part of the project RestART Europe-Mentoring Second-Chance Female Entrepreneurs to Restart the European Arts and Creative Sector (E+, 2021-1-FR01-KA220-SCH-000029887), more specifically, activity 5 within the PR4 "Mentor Capacity building program and Handbook".

The project results of this fourth stage entitled "Mentor Capacity Building Program and Handbook" are 1) the creation of one Handbook on the Toolkit for Mentors developed in the previous stage (PR3), and 2) the creation of an online capacity-building program for mentors, developed according to the results from the research conducted within PR1.
The Handbook consists of a manual with guidelines on how to use the toolkit. The aim is to provide an efficient guide to the mentors on the proper use of the Toolkit, to facilitate the mentors' understanding of the use of the Toolkit, and overall, to facilitate the onboarding of Mentors. In this way, mentors can get the most out of this Toolkit.
The Online Capacity Building Program for mentors aims to contribute to the upskilling of mentors, by equipping mentors with adequate knowledge, skills and tools, hence improving the quality of the mentorship.

All RestART training materials developed as part of the PR4 and PR3, including the Toolkit and the Handbook for the Toolkit, as well as the Online Capacity Building Program for mentors, are available on the Ment-Net platform (https://ment-net.restarteurope.org/).

This report aims to reflect on the activities conducted within PR4, as well as the lessons learned and the challenges that arose, and it is freely available to download at the Ment-Net platform.

2. The Experience of creating, testing and implementing the Mentor Capacity building program and Handbook

The outputs of the PR4, namely the Handbook and the Online Capacity Building Program followed a very iterative process, through regular consortium meetings, internal and external peer review, continuous communication with the target groups (through online channels and regional events), feedback tools and reflection moments, to ensure the quality of the materials produced.

2.1. The Handbook

The Handbook for Toolkit use draft was proposed by the PR Leader, followed by iterative feedback from the consortium partners' team, and from feedback from the experts in the partners' institutions. The continuous iterative process improved the quality of the Handbook. As an example, the Handbook was produced originally in English, but after a reflection session, the consortium decided to make it more accessible and contribute to its wider dissemination, it should be translated into other languages besides English. Hence, each consortium partner translated the Handbook to its native language, resulting in a free pdf with the 4 different languages, besides English. Moreover, after a consortium feedback session, to increase the comprehensibility of the Handbook, besides the textual elements, visual elements were added to the Handbook, to better achieve our goal of guiding mentors on how to use the Toolkit. Another way of improving the access and use of the Handbook was to include it as part of the Ment-Net platform, in close conjunction with the Toolkit itself.

2.2. The Online Capacity Building Program

The Online Building Program was constructed based on the PR1 results and on the consortium reflection, and hence the focus on the topics of mentorship and on the topics of entrepreneurship in the arts and creative sector, communication and other 21-st century skills, as well as the topic of gender inequalities in the arts and creative sectors, that are of utmost importance to change individual attitudes, with spillover effects in the change in organizations and the sector as a whole.

These relevant topics, based on evidence collected in PR1, were designed to be delivered in an online course format, with diverse methods and materials to promote active learning, in a continuum from theoretical knowledge to practice. The elements included: Slides and video presentations, Case studies, Discussion topics, Individual exercises, Collaborative activities, and Reading material.

Moreover, the course delivery through the online Ment-Net platform was designed to enable both 1) self-learning – where mentors can explore the courses at their own pace and interests – and 2) peer learning – as the platform provided specific menus, such as the "Discussion Forum", where specific platform features allow for mentors to exchange messages and share resources with mentors only, besides the "Discussion Forum" where interaction between mentors-mentees take place.

The above-mentioned feature in the "Discussion Forum" is also another example of how the iterative process that was the basis of the PR4 activities, implied the refinement of the PR2-the platform Ment-Net. Another example is the technical distinction in the platform between "Registration" and "Log In".

The improvement to the online platform Ment-Net was a reply to the needs of our target group, needs that we acknowledged through the continuous feedback of regional mentors with each of the restART partners (eg: the community of mentors in the Netherlands getting in touch with FIRDA, the community of mentors in Portugal, getting in touch with Lusófona University, the community of mentor in Portugal, getting in touch with UNINA), several platform technical features were improved throughout PR4, hence improving the quality of our target group user experience (the mentors).

Throughout the construction of the online courses – both content, delivery and integration in the Ment-Net Platform - that comprise PR4, we gathered continuous feedback, internal (peer review within the consortium) and external (feedback from our target group, the mentors).

After the consortium created the two online courses that comprise the Online Capacity Building Program, we did a round of internal feedback (internal peer review). After the first internal validation, some adjustments were made, and only then the second validation phase start, with external feedback.

The consortium created a survey to assess the satisfaction, relevance, and feasibility of the target group (mentors), as well as to gather their suggestions about the online capacity building program. This feedback tool had a total of fifteen questions, twelve multiple-choice questions, and three open-ended questions (see Appendix A). The multiple-choice questions utilized a Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." The survey was distributed online, through a specialized survey platform (*paperform)*. The survey was anonymous to promote more freedom of expression, and in our data analysis (check next section) the respondents are identified by the letter R (for respondents) and a random number.

The validation mentors (experts and potential mentors) were recruited by the RestART education partners (Lusófona, UNINA and FIRDA), from the pool of experts in entrepreneurship in the arts and creative sector, as well as from the professional networks relevant to the arts and creative sector. The validation experts were sent the courses and were asked to take the courses, watch the videos, and give feedback. We also asked those

validation mentors to invite other potential validation mentors. The validation period occurred from April 29 to May 3, 2024.

We got a total of 11 valid replies. Initially, we received 16 responses, but after identifying some duplications and validating them, we got 11 valid replies. We analyzed the qualitative data through thematic analysis and the quantitative data through descriptive statistics. In the next section, we present the results.

As part of our iterative process of building the Online Capacity Building Program, we transformed these results into an action plan to make improvements accordingly, which we detail in section 4.

Another way to collect feedback was through events such as the Multiplier Events, where the event hosts circulated a feedback form. Also, we collected the public information available on the online Ment-Net platform, namely the information available on the menu "Testimonials" and "Discussion Forum". Besides all these systematic ways of getting feedback, often people would often get in touch with consortium members by email or direct messages on social networks, to ask questions or give their opinion.

3. Mentors' feedback on the online courses

The mentors' experiences with the RestART Europe Online Capacity Building Program were overall very positive. The feedback survey results showed that most mentors:

- Were satisfied with the RestART Europe Course (68.8% strongly agreed, 25% agreed).
- Gained new knowledge from the course (62.5% strongly agreed, 37.5% agreed).
- Felt that the course met their needs and expectations (50% strongly agreed, 43.8% agreed).

The comments in the open-ended questions were overall positive, as we can understand from some general comments from Respondents, here identified through the letter R and (random) response number:

- There is so much more to gain from this course. (R3)
- It looks great! (R4)
- Great job! (R9)

The majority of the respondents agreed that the course content, materials, and structure met their needs. Positive feedback highlighted its relevance, balance between theory and practice, clear language, and diverse resources.

The courses were well-organized and structured into manageable modules, facilitating effective learning and retention of information. The self-assessments effectively evaluated understanding of the course material. The course addressed the concepts and skills needed to support individuals or organizations in the mentoring journey as entrepreneurs in the arts and culture sector.

The topics covered aligned with the expectations and needs of a mentor. The course utilized various instructional methods such as videos, readings, and exercises to facilitate learning. Accessing the course materials and resources was considered easy. Overall, participants demonstrate satisfaction with the RestART Europe Course.

Below we detail the positive aspects of the online courses and the aspects that could be improved.

3.1. Positive Aspects of the Online Courses

In terms of course content, materials, and structure, most respondents strongly agreed that the courses:

- Are relevant to the CCI sector (62.5% strongly agreed, 31.3% agreed);
- Provide concepts and skills for supporting the mentoring journey (62.5% strongly agreed, 37.5% agreed;
- Are well organized and structured (68.8% strongly agreed, 25% agreed);
- Facilitate learning through manageable sections (68.8% strongly agreed, 25% agreed);
- Facilitate learning through various supports and methods (68.8% strongly agreed, 25% agreed);
- Are written in a clear and coherent language (68.8% strongly agreed, 25% agreed);
- Provide easily accessible materials and resources (50% strongly agreed, 37.5% agreed).

The positive feedback on the course content, materials, and structure was also highlighted in the open-ended questions, and can be grouped into the following themes:

- Relevance of the course to the target audience (both mentees and mentors)

    - "It is good that the needs of the mentees are addressed." (R2)
    - "I think it's the real advantage value for mentors." (R5)
    - "It is handy for people who want to start mentoring or teaching. Congratulations." (R8)

- ○ "This course approaches topics that usually are challenging for artists, such as developing organizing skills and finding new ways to maximize the monetization of their passions." (R9)

- Contents

  - ○ A good balance between theory and practice: "It provided ample opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge in practical scenarios, making the learning experience more meaningful and applicable to real-life situations" (R3)
  - ○ "Contents, online program and easy topics." (R9)
  - ○ "I really appreciated the economic and financial support of this course." (R5)
  - ○ "The sharing of legal frameworks & talking about well-being." (R11)
  - ○ "References to non-Western methodologies." (R11)
  - ○ "The course systematized several aspects that we usually learn from trial-and-error." (R8)
  - ○ Clear and accessible Language in videos and documents: "English pronunciation for good comprehension in videos" & Documents: "material selected with good communication. (R11)

- Format and resources

  - ○ "We have videos, recommendations of further videos and readings, exercises etc. that makes it very interesting and it enhances the learning process." (R1)
  - ○ the variety of resources etc. is really great" (R2)
  - ○ "The course offered a diverse range of topics and materials, keeping the learning experience engaging and stimulating" (R3)
  - ○ "The toolbox and the suggested videos." (R6)
  - ○ "A lot of footage/TED talk/ links. Very interesting." (R7)
  - ○ Videos: colours choice for clarity and not fatiguing for the eyes; videos without being heavy, which is great for online and asynchronous courses; & Documents: referring to the toolkit was always very appreciated. (R11)

- Outcomes
  - ○ "Finally, it not only expanded my knowledge but also contributed to my personal growth, encouraging critical thinking and problem-solving skills." (R3)
  - ○ "I found out an unexpected skillful organization which impressed me and gave me back great contents, but mostly great relationships." (R4)

3.2. Recommendations to improve the Online Courses

Of the 11 responses received, 2 even indicated that there was nothing to improve.

- "It has been a very interesting and empowering experience. I really can't find improvements to be noted about. Excellent result." (R2)

- "Very interesting and empowering experience. I really can't find anything negative to be said about or improvements to be suggested." (R3)

The other 9 provided valuable insights for improvement, covering various aspects including content and technical issues.

- Content (in general)

  - "Additionally, integrating real-world case studies could provide practical insights and application opportunities." (R1)
  - "As part of entrepreneurial skills, address the topics of failure, resilience, and empathy." (R10)
  - "Finally, as a course conceptualized for women and non-binary people, all the "watch now" sections should have at least as many women and non-binary people as men. In Module 3 - Growth, the "watch now" section only had men…" (R5)
  - "This one felt a bit like girl-boss feminism. A less capitalist approach to art might be more empowering. As stated by Audre Lorde: "For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us to temporarily beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change." (R6)
  - "Regarding the content of the course, I would suggest including more practical examples of challenges people face when mentoring someone, based on real-life experiences." (R6)
  - "Moreover, it would be nice to remind mentors that sometimes their mentees can't reproduce the strategies and methods suggested, due to differences in socioeconomic context, network, individual personalities, or neurodivergence. In those cases, the mentor shouldn't give up but try to find new strategies to achieve common goals." (R6)

- Content in videos
  - "Just a little note: the title of the last module appears as "socio-cultural skills" on YouTube and in the pdf, but on the website, it is called "socio-economic skills". (R7)
  - "Create your own subtitles, don't go with the automatic ones. (R11)
  - "Match the order of what is being said to what is written on the video slides (noticed on module 2: negotiation)." (R11)
  - "In the videos, the logos and pictures seem to be a bit blurred." (R1 & R2)

- Content in text
  - "Unify which English you use." (R11)
  - "Double-check some typos and formatting throughout all materials (e.g., text alignments, final dots, bullet points)." (R8)

- Formats

  - "I recommend incorporating more interactive activities to promote active engagement and deeper understanding." (R1)
  - "For a course that is aimed at people working in or with creatives, it is not very creative. Also, I would focus more on activating prior knowledge, and elements such as gamification or interactive images or videos." (R4)

- ○ "Perhaps add a hyperlink when mentioning the Toolkit throughout the modules (instead of only at the end of the material). Or add it at the beginning of the material with the explanation that it is mentioned during the course." (R 8)
- Length:
  - ○ "Add the duration of each "Collaboration Activity" and the necessary materials for it would be helpful to plan and apply it." (R9)
  - ○ "Add the time duration and materials necessary for each Collaboration Activity". (R10)
  - ○ "Add the duration of the whole module at the beginning, it helps with the expectations and planning." (R9)

These comments are aligned with the quantitative results (see Appendix B) where 50% of the respondents agreed that the courses "Have an appropriate length for the topics covered (50% agreed, 43.8% strongly agreed).

- Videos' format:
  - ○ "I might be wrong, but it seems that the voice in the videos was reading a text. I find that it would be more engaging if it were a speaking voice, as it is usually more dynamic. The slow pace made me change the speed of the YouTube videos to 1.5x. I would also prefer if the intro, explaining the project and crediting the support, was shorter; in some cases, it takes almost half of the YouTube video." (R6)
  - ○ "The course introduction is a bit slow and with much repetition." (R8)
  - ○ "Perhaps mention in the Overview Video how the course is offered (each module has a video and booklet to be used complementarily)." (R9)
  - ○ "My additional comments lie on accessibility: As I watched all the videos with subtitles, the only available were the automatic ones. My additional suggestion is to create your own subtitles because it becomes more accurate to what's being said and with the cadence of the speech too. Nevertheless, the automatic subtitles were pretty accurate but there were some residual mistakes." (R10)

- Outcomes
  - ○ "Fostering a collaborative online community where students can exchange ideas and support each other would enrich the learning experience further." (R1)
  - ○ "It feels a lot like consuming, more than doing it yourself. For instance: if the course were about how to learn to play a guitar, I would've got a lot of tips, and inspiration, but in the end the quality lies in practice (a lot) and strong feedback. The same applies of course for writing, networking and presenting. I am curious about the real Transfer to Skills!" (R5)

- Platform technical issues

  - ○ "In the registration, you cannot see the fields very well to fill in." (R1)
  - ○ "It's not so simple to login as a mentor. On the website you don't see the login button right away." (Participant 7)

- Self-assessment
  - o 50% of the respondents agreed that the course provided effective self-assessment tools (50% agreed, 37.5% strongly agreed).

4. Online Capacity Building Program Improvements and Adjustments

To address the feedback collected, we created an action plan with response items for each topic and distributed the tasks between the different RestART partners.

The improvements were made in three different areas: content, format and platform usability. Below we list the actions we took to adjust and improve the Online Capacity Building according to the feedback, and to meet the needs and expectations of our target group, the mentors.

1. CONTENT
1.1. Created and added more and more diverse topics and activities
- Created and added more content on the topic of failure and resilience as self-regulation
- Created and added self-assessment quizzes for course 1 and course 2
- Created more fast-paced videos, with more visual support
- Created a message at the end of the slide deck to address the following comment: "Remind mentors that sometimes their mentees can't reproduce the strategies and methods suggested, due to differences in socioeconomic context, network, individual personalities, or neurodivergence. In those cases, the mentor shouldn't give up but try to find new strategies to achieve common goals (R6)"
- Replaced existing video material for Course 1-Module 3 where men were the majority, for videos that represented women and/or non-binary people
- Generated more case study exercises with real-life examples

1.2. Formal issues and typos
- standardized written English in videos and in written materials
- conducted proofreading

2. FORMAT
- added the estimated duration/length in modules
- included a list of materials needed for each "Collaboration Activity"
- added hyperlinks to the Toolkit (in English)

3. PLATFORM
- improved platform user-friendliness
- improved the registration and log-in process

5. Lessons

The process of creating, validating and implementing training materials for an online course to capacitate women and non-binary entrepreneurs who RestART in the arts and creative sectors taught us some lessons.

The first and most important lesson is that RestART Europe met the high need for training materials in online formats on the topics of mentorship and entrepreneurship in the arts and creative sector, especially directed towards disadvantaged social groups in this sector. This need was met with the RestART training materials.

The second lesson is on the empirical confirmation of the importance of mentorship itself to mitigate inequalities in the sector, and on the innovative aspect of providing training in mentorship – hence framing mentorship as an interpersonal competence – and having an online interactive platform to foster mentorship relationships within an equality ethos.

Another lesson learned is the value of equality and diversity in educational materials' contents. The project made conscious efforts to represent women and non-binary individuals in video content, addressing gender imbalances and promoting inclusivity. This not only makes the content more relatable to a diverse audience but also promotes gender equality, enhancing the learning experience.

The fourth lesson is on the importance of a flexible online training format, that RestART Europe was able to deliver through the online Ment-Net platform, which enables not only self-paced learning but also a forum to promote peer learning, as well as the sharing of knowledge and resources.

Finally, it is important to use clear and coherent language in all educational materials, both text and video, to ensure that the content is accessible and comprehensible. Additionally, integrating practical and real-life scenarios into online courses has proven to significantly enhance the applicability and effectiveness of theoretical content. This approach not only

makes the material more engaging but also helps learners see the direct relevance of their learning to real-world situations.

6. Challenges

The process of creating, validating and implementing training materials for an online course to capacitate women and non-binary entrepreneurs who RestART in the arts and creative sectors also presented several challenges.

One of the main challenges was to ensure content diversity and equal representation. As training content providers, it is important to ensure the diversity and equality of training content, by ensuring that the content does not solely represent male perspectives, by assuring that women and non-binary people are represented in videos, as well as in the written language. Regarding the written language, one significant challenge was translating materials from English to Latin languages, such as Portuguese or Italian, where the gendered language is very evident, and it was an extra challenge to combine an inclusive language while maintaining clarity. Hence, this process required careful adaptation. This process was not only time-consuming but also required careful consideration to avoid tokenism and to genuinely reflect diversity.

Another challenge is the need for continuous innovation in course design. Suggestions from two mentors for more interactive activities and gamification indicate that keeping learners engaged requires dynamic and evolving teaching methods, that must be supported by technical features that require resources. This lesson underscores the need for educational programs to remain adaptable and responsive to the needs and preferences of their diverse audience.

Other challenges are related to the technical issues, either of the videos (eg: subtitles) or the platform. It was a challenge that was mitigated, through iterative feedback, technical adjustments and testing. Hence, we could improve overall accessibility and user satisfaction.

Lastly, there were the challenges common to all the tasks that use iterative methodologies, namely, the challenges of coordinating feedback and implementing changes across multiple partners and regions. The iterative process of gathering and integrating feedback from various stakeholders required effective communication and collaboration, which was achieved

successfully within the consortium team, composed by people with complementary expertise and having in common professionalism, rigour and commitment in all their endeavours.

7. Conclusions

The RestART Europe project has made significant strides in supporting women and non-binary individuals in the arts and creative sectors who seek to restart their businesses following setbacks. This initiative has demonstrated the importance of training, and of tailored mentorship programs in fostering resilience among second-chance entrepreneurs.

One of the key impacts of the project has been the development and dissemination of comprehensive training materials, including a detailed Handbook and Toolkit, and an Online Capacity Building Program. These resources were meticulously crafted through iterative feedback and rigorous testing, ensuring they meet the specific needs of the target audience. By providing guidelines on mentorship and entrepreneurship, the project has empowered mentors to deliver high-quality, personalized guidance to mentees. Moreover, the project's efforts to represent women and non-binary individuals prominently in all educational content not only addressed gender imbalances but also enriched the learning experience by promoting diversity and equality. This has, in turn, contributed to mitigating inequalities within the arts and creative sectors, by promoting peer support and a culture of equality and diversity.

The RestART Europe project also highlighted the critical role of an online interactive platform, Ment-Net, in facilitating mentorship relationships. This platform not only enabled self-paced learning but also fostered a community of practice where mentors and mentees could exchange ideas, share resources, and support each other.

The impacts of the RestART Europe project extend beyond individual mentees to the broader arts and creative sectors. By equipping mentors with the skills and tools needed to support second-chance entrepreneurs, the project has helped to foster a more resilient and innovative community. The lessons learned and challenges identified through this initiative provide a valuable framework for future efforts aimed at this target group.

In conclusion, the RestART Europe project has successfully demonstrated the power of mentorship in driving positive change and competitiveness in the arts and creative sectors.

Its comprehensive training materials, equality approach, and interactive platform are educational innovations that have created impact in both mentors and mentees and have provided the grounds for future work on the upskilling of the artists and creative workforce, towards more sustainable careers and a more competitive European artistic and creative sector.

APPENDIX

Appendix A

Survey Questions

12 multiple-choice questions:

1. The content of the course is relevant to the needs and challenges faced by professionals in the arts and culture sector.
2. The topics covered in the course modules aligned with my expectations and needs as a mentor.
3. The course adequately addressed the key concepts and skills necessary for supporting individuals or organizations in the mentoring journey as entrepreneurs in the arts and culture sector.
4. The self-assessments were effective in evaluating my understanding of the course materials.
5. The length of the course was appropriate for effectively covering the topics.
6. The organization and structure of courses were designed appropriately.
7. The language used in the course is clear and coherent.
8. The modules are appropriately divided into manageable sections, allowing for effective learning and retention of information.
9. The course effectively utilizes different instructional methods (e.g., videos, readings, exercises) to facilitate learning.
10. It was easy to access the course materials and resources.
11. In general, I am satisfied with the RestART Europe Course.
12. I have gained new knowledge after taking the course.

3 open-ended questions:

1. What aspects of the course did you find most beneficial or valuable?
2. What recommendation would you offer for enhancing the quality and effectiveness of the course?
3. Do you have further comments or additional feedback? If not, we would like to thank you once again for your time and valuable feedback.

Appendix B

Survey Quantitative Results

Course participation:

- Understanding and Building Relationships between Mentors and Mentees: 9 out of 16 respondents (56.3%)
- Building Necessary Skills to Restart a Business in the Art and Creative Industries: 7 out of 16 respondents (43.8%)

Relevance of course content:

- 62.5% strongly agreed that the content is relevant to the needs and challenges faced by professionals in the arts and culture sector
- 31.3% agreed
- 6.3% remained neutral

Alignment with mentor expectations:

- 50.0% strongly agreed that the topics covered aligned with their expectations and needs
- 43.8% agreed
- 6.3% remained neutral

Coverage of key concepts and skills:

- 62.5% strongly agreed that the course addressed key concepts and skills necessary for mentoring in the arts and culture sector
- 37.5% agreed

Effectiveness of self-assessments:

- 50.0% agreed that the self-assessments were effective
- 37.5% strongly agreed
- 6.3% were neutral
- 6.3% strongly disagreed
- Appropriateness of course length:
- 50.0% agreed that the course length was appropriate
- 43.8% strongly agreed
- 6.3% remained neutral

Course organization and structure:

- 68.8% strongly agreed that the course was well-organized and structured
- 25.0% agreed
- 6.3% disagreed

Clarity and coherence of language:

- 68.8% strongly agreed that the language used was clear and coherent

- 25.0% agreed
- 6.3% were neutral

Division of modules:

- 68.8% strongly agreed that the modules were appropriately divided into manageable sections
- 25.0% agreed
- 6.3% disagreed

Utilization of instructional methods:

- 75.0% strongly agreed that various instructional methods facilitated learning
- 18.8% agreed
- 6.3% disagreed

Accessibility of course materials:

- 50.0% strongly agreed that course materials were easily accessible
- 37.5% agreed
- 6.3% were neutral
- 6.3% strongly disagreed

Overall satisfaction:

- 68.8% strongly agreed with their overall satisfaction with the RestART Europe Course
- 25.0% agreed
- 6.3% disagreed

Knowledge gained:

- 62.5% strongly agreed that they gained new knowledge
- 37.5% agreed