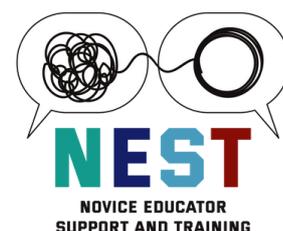




# Interim Report

## Executive Summary



Launched in February 2021, the **Novice Educator Support and Training (NEST)** project explores the question of what an effective programme for novice teachers and their mentors should look like. The main goal is to demonstrate that the NEST training program for mentors is an effective solution to support novice teachers working in disadvantaged schools, and ultimately influence national policies that enhance education systems. Overall, 450+ mentors from 39 regions are being trained across the EU through the NEST project, who are supporting 1300+ novice teachers. Project partners include Teach For All network partners in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Romania and Spain, Ministries of Education, educational expert unions, and a university who is leading the evaluation of the NEST intervention.

The NEST interim report is an official deliverable submitted to the **European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)** that provides an overview on the project's progress, including finance, outputs and results. The first interim report submitted under the NEST project covered the first year of the project from February 2021-March 2022. On July 2022 the Executive Agency approved the report, highlighting the great participation and contribution of the Ministries of Education in the project, the achievement of all the implementation activities with quality outcomes, and the great management and dissemination of the project. The following pages summarize the implementation of the project, reviewing the challenges faced and including a list of outputs that have been prepared during the first half of the project.

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With the support of the Erasmus+  
programme of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. The content included on this website reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

## Highlights from the Interim Report

Since February 2021 the NEST consortium has been working closely to refine its **Theory of Change**, settle the experimental design and recruit participants for the intervention and control groups across seven education systems in five countries (Austria, Belgium, Brussels, Romania and Spain). The **NEST mentoring model** trains experienced teachers who serve as mentors to novice teachers in disadvantaged schools during two school years. Each cohort consists of one group intervention group (receiving adaptive mentoring) and one control group (receiving the mentoring in place within their education system, if any). Both cohorts are assessed through questionnaires based on scientific sources.

The first **NEST technical report** was submitted in April 2022, including the NEST theoretical background, its evaluation design and instrument development, and an overview of the sample. In addition, the report narrows down on the challenges faced by disadvantaged schools, perspectives from novice teachers and the benefits of mentoring. One of the key highlights of the technical report are the results of the first questionnaires focusing on the novice teacher's professional background and their current experiences working at disadvantaged schools. Initial results across participating countries are displayed on the table below.

### Highest ranked novice teacher needs across education systems

Teacher needs	Education system
I would like more support on how to motivate my students	All education systems
I would like more strategies on how to raise self-confidence and ambitions in students	Bulgaria, Flanders (BE), Wallonia (BE), Madrid (ES), Romania, Austria
I would like more information on how I can introduce learning strategies in the classroom	Flanders (BE), Wallonia (BE), Catalonia (ES), Madrid (ES), Romania, Austria
I would like more opportunities to share experiences about situations of conflict with others	All education systems
I would like more opportunities to share best practices with other teachers	Bulgaria, Flanders (BE), Wallonia (BE), Catalonia (ES), Madrid (ES), Austria

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NEST is committed to prove that innovation in the field of education is possible, and that it can have a systemic impact. To this end:

- The consortium has built a **project website** including all project updates and key results, available for anyone to download. These have been promoted through social media and newsletters.
- It has held five in person and online **dissemination events** involving 750+ stakeholders across five countries, including representatives from the European Parliament, Ministries of Education, EACEA, Boards of Education and Teacher Unions.
- In addition, NEST was presented at the **WERA 2022** in San Diego (USA), one of the greatest education research conferences globally.

It is to be noted that the first months of NEST were challenging as they coincided with some of the most severe outbreaks of the COVID-19 pandemic which led to school closures. However, the consortium found new ways to engage participation by widening the training portfolio and proactively researching and sharing engagement techniques. In addition, the consortium faced difficulties in recruiting mentors, novice teachers and control group members which delayed the delivery of questionnaires. Nonetheless, thanks to consortium cooperation at management and steering committee meetings, they were finally sent out with no consequences for the project results.

To conclude, partners identified three main takeaways which have shaped consortium culture, and traced a path forward for the NEST project:

- **Being communicative and transparent about project challenges leads to great solutions.** This approach allowed for NEST to make the most out of the multi-stakeholder partnership, bringing opportunities and inspiration to think out of the box.
- **Building a community online requires more time for communication and opportunities for people to open up.** Due the pandemic, most of the trainings and meetings had to be adapted to take place virtually. At NEST, the allocation of more time for conversation and unprogrammed exchange in training sessions and meetings resulted in higher levels of trust and appreciation of the opportunity of collaboration.
- **Adapting the content and approach to each context brings great results.** The NEST project has tailored its approach to each of the seven education systems taking part in the project. While this has sometimes been challenging, this has allowed to better meet the needs of mentors and novice teachers.

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