



# Novice Educator Support and Training (NEST)

7.3 EXPLOITATION SUMMARY REPORT INCLUDING  
STRATEGIES FOR MAINSTREAMING AND  
UP-SCALING POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

WP7 EXPLOITATION

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Deliverable description

The summary report is a reader friendly version of the NEST public final report specifically developed for exploitation purposes. This consists of a summary of: the key objectives and features of the project; the methodology followed; their key results and deriving policy recommendations and options for mainstreaming and up-scaling the NEST model at country (including at decentralised level as/where appropriate) level.

## 1. Introduction and background

During their induction phase, newly qualified teachers often perform many tasks similar to those of experienced teachers and receive appropriate compensation. In nearly two-thirds of the countries studied, first-time public sector teachers have access to a structured induction phase, usually lasting one school year. While this induction is often mandatory, it is merely recommended in some educational systems. In certain countries, induction is limited to mentoring. Approximately 60% of EU teachers with less than five years of experience reported participating in a formal induction program when they started teaching.

Effective mentoring is crucial for supporting new teachers, especially at the beginning of their careers. The OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey defines mentoring as a support system where experienced teachers or coaches help new colleagues or prospective teachers. The survey found that teachers who participated in induction activities felt more confident in their teaching abilities and more satisfied with their jobs. It also highlighted that the early professional development and support that novice teachers receive are vital for confirming their career choice and staying in the teaching profession. Overall, the survey concluded that mentoring positively influences teacher commitment, retention, classroom practices, and student achievement.

The European Commission's Communication, "Rethinking Education," emphasizes the need for 'skills renewal across the profession' to better align schools with the modern world. This includes updating recruitment, selection, and retention strategies; enhancing Initial Teacher Education (ITE); reinforcing the role of induction and mentoring; and promoting flexible, individualized, and collaborative professional development linked to career prospects and school development plans.

At the EU policy level, the value of mentoring new teachers is recognized, and related actions have been advocated for in EU Member States. However, access to adaptive mentorship remains limited for novice teachers in Europe. The NEST project addresses this by investigating best practices for supporting new teachers, incorporating them into a mentoring approach, curriculum, and model, and evaluating their impact across five Member States.

The goal of this document is to present a methodology for effectively scaling up mentoring models to support novice teachers, based on the conclusions and recommendations from the 'Novice Educator Support and Training' (NEST) project. Co-funded by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Key Action 3 programme for policy reform, NEST aims to enhance the effectiveness, motivation, and retention of novice teachers, particularly in disadvantaged schools. Further details about the project and its objectives are provided in Section 2.

The following chapters outline the various elements of the NEST mentoring model, offering practical insights for education stakeholders on supporting novice teachers. These insights

are valuable not only at the school level but also for regional and national education authorities looking to scale the model to their respective levels.

## 2. What is NEST?

The Novice Educator Support and Training (NEST) project, co-funded by the European Commission as part of the ERASMUS+ program, addressed the high attrition rates among new teachers, especially in disadvantaged schools. The project aimed to create and implement an adaptive mentor training program to support these novice teachers. The final evaluation report assessed the effectiveness of NEST's interventions across seven education systems in Europe: Austria, Belgium (both the Flemish Community and the Wallonia-Brussels Federation), Bulgaria, Romania, and Spain (Catalonia and the Community of Madrid). In each participating system, a Teach For All partner and at least one other educational collaborator, such as a Ministry of Education or a teacher's union, were involved.

The NEST project focused on the development, implementation, and evaluation of a mentor training program specifically designed to support novice teachers in disadvantaged schools. Mentoring was identified as crucial for improving teacher engagement, teaching practices, and student outcomes. However, access to mentoring was inconsistent across OECD countries, with only 22% of novice teachers on average having an assigned mentor. This lack of mentoring support was particularly harmful in disadvantaged schools, where teacher turnover was higher.

To address this issue, the NEST project developed a mentor training program tailored to the unique challenges faced by novice teachers in disadvantaged schools. Managed by Bulgaria, the project consortium included partners from the seven participating education systems, each contributing to different aspects of the program's implementation and evaluation.

The NEST project provided valuable insights into how structured mentoring can significantly benefit novice teachers, helping them stay in the profession and improve their teaching skills. The NEST consortium followed several steps to achieve their objectives:

**1. Evidence Research to Define the NEST Theory of Change:** The consortium identified and selected best practices from international literature and involved stakeholders, including the Teach For All organization, network partners, and public authorities. These practices were then packaged to develop the NEST mentor training and support participants. This included creating a NEST mentor curriculum, developing training guidelines, establishing a NEST platform for online training, and compiling a toolbox of resources to support mentors across various pilots.

**2. Recruitment of Mentors:** The consortium developed a recruitment methodology to select mentors for the NEST training program, supported by a manual to assist organizations in their recruitment efforts. Each pilot recruited and developed mentors who received training and support over two school years. A cascade model was applied to

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prepare and motivate novice teachers, wherein professional trainers from the Teach For All network trained experienced teachers to mentor and support novice teachers. This involved three levels of stakeholders:

- Trainers: Professional education trainers with experience in coaching, setting objectives, and providing support and mentorship.
- Mentors: Experienced teachers selected for the program, trained by the trainers, and responsible for training, supporting, and observing novice teachers.
- Novice Teachers: Teachers with no more than two years of teaching experience.

**3. Monitoring and Evaluation:** External evaluators from the University of Duisburg-Essen conducted an evaluation spanning two school years for NEST mentors and two cohorts of novice teachers, each followed for one school year. Online surveys tracked the progress of mentors and novice teachers, enabling an assessment of their development. Control groups of mentors and novice teachers were also surveyed to compare those who received NEST training/mentoring with those who did not. The evaluation revealed that NEST mentor training improved mentors' ability to adapt to novice teachers' needs and increased their enthusiasm and self-assessed competence. Novice teachers with NEST mentors reported better-focused mentoring and higher mentor competence, and they showed increased teaching competence, professional resilience, and willingness to stay in the profession.

**4. Scaling Up Key Learnings:** Based on the results from monitoring and evaluation, the consortium documented key learnings and mechanisms necessary to scale up the NEST mentor model effectively. These findings were shared with policymakers, school leaders, teachers, and other stakeholders.

Overall, the NEST consortium achieved significant impact at different levels, as demonstrated in the table below. The next chapter offers an overview of the key lessons and recommendations drawn from the NEST project.

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NEST Impact Pathway	Indicator	NEST impact data
<b>Addressing EU challenges</b>	<i>Short-term:</i> Number of direct project outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of articles published in peer review journals: <b>6 research publications about NEST on academic journals (open access).</b></li> <li>Number of publications made available through partner's and external's websites (including Erasmus+ results platform): <b>15+ deliverables published on the NEST website and the Erasmus+ results platform</b></li> <li>Number of innovations (e.g. services, methodologies, processes): <b>1 NEST mentor model applied and adapted to 5 Member States</b></li> </ul>
	<i>Medium-term:</i> Number of transferable innovations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of knowledge transfers and adoptions by diverse stakeholders (e.g. trainings, methodologies, protocols, guidelines): <b>during the implementation phase, the innovative NEST mentoring model was adopted by 5 Member States and 7 Education systems.</b></li> <li>Number changes in professional standards, protocols, practices and services on stakeholder's activity and organisation (e.g. introduction of mentoring practices). <b>Informed by the NEST project, the government of Catalonia tapped into ESF+ funding to up-scale an induction program for novice teachers in the region.</b></li> </ul>
	<i>Long-term:</i> Effects from use of intervention results and innovations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of improvements: <b>1 final evaluation report showcasing the results from the NEST experimental research, showcasing the successful improvements for both mentors and novice teachers compared to control groups.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Supporting teachers</b>	<i>Short-term:</i> Number of beneficiaries from NEST intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of experienced teachers (mentors): <b>450 mentors received mentor training through the NEST project</b></li> <li>Number of novice teachers (mentees): <b>1,300 novice teachers received support at the beginning of their careers through the NEST project</b></li> </ul>
	<i>Medium-term:</i> Number of replicable actions/interventions where teachers contribute or participate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of actions/interventions using replicable mechanisms for mentor training and novice teacher support: <b>The NEST consortium prepared deliverables including mentor training curriculum, training program, toolbox of best practices for these to be replicated across contexts. Deliverable 7.3 supported the uptake of the NEST model by explaining in detail its different components and where to find them.</b></li> </ul>
	<i>Long-term:</i> Uptake of action/intervention results and innovative solutions by teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of actions/interventions implemented by stakeholders outside the project, which are based on the NEST results. <b>The NEST project developed a series of deliverables for the successful uptake of the model across other countries. These were disseminated across stakeholders by the Teach For All network (16 network partners in the EU). Local authorities in Bulgaria are also currently exploring the possibility of uptaking components of the NEST mentoring approach.</b></li> </ul>

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<b>Supporting policy-making</b>	<i>Short-term:</i> NEST producing policy-relevant findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of policy briefs or other policy outputs focusing on mentoring and novice teacher support. <b>The NEST project prepared a series of deliverables under WP7 targeting policymakers. Alongside WP6, they prepared 2 deliverables to influence policy reform. These were translated into all project languages.</b></li> </ul>
	<i>Medium-term:</i> NEST policy-relevant findings reaching policy makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of policy interactions (e.g. forums, conferences, consultations) in relation to mentoring and novice teacher support. <b>The NEST project organised a total of 15 national-level dissemination and exploitation events, with +2,300 attendees including high level policy authorities in each country + 1 EU policy conference with 80 participants including high-level representatives from the EU institutions.</b></li> </ul>
	<i>Long-term:</i> Policy documents citing NEST findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of policy documents citing knowledge from NEST findings: <b>1 mention of NEST in the Law Of Education of Romania (enacted in September 2023), which poses mentoring at the core of the teaching career.</b></li> <li>Policy makers citing knowledge from NEST findings as the basis of their policy proposals. <b>Romanian and Catalan public authorities citing NEST in at least 3 policy conferences to build knowledge on the rationale for their recently included mentoring/induction programmes.</b></li> </ul>

### 3. How should a mentoring model look like?

Many EU education systems have policies that encourage experienced teachers to support less experienced counterparts. However, being a successful mentor is not just about a longer tenure in education, but also about possessing the skills, mindsets and knowledge that ensure efficient support. The need is that much more acute in schools working with disadvantaged students as they are typically even more challenging for novice teachers. It is thus important to recruit experienced educators, motivated by the opportunity to support novice teachers working with students who might require more time, attention and differentiated approach than their peers in better-performing schools. Informed by the desk research and collected good practices, NEST refined and substantiated its theory of change and developed a final version validated by all partners after a cycle of feedback and adaptation.

As per Serrat, O. (2010), best practices are procedures, guidelines, or methodologies that have proved to be effective in one entire organisation or a small part of it. It is generally believed that, if transferred or upscaled effectively, these best practices will have a similar positive impact on other organisations as well. Most organisations know that learning from previous experience and lessons increases their chances of success in the future. Finding ways to do so can also provide staff with the resources they need to complete tasks faster, better, and more effectively. This is often done with instructional manuals and how-to guides, which typically provide information or advice on a particular topic. It can also be accomplished with taxonomies which are a common way to organise content logically. Leading organisations maximise various opportunities to identify, create, store, share, and implement best practices across all core knowledge activities. A good practice is defined as anything that has been tried and shown to work fully or partially, and that may have implications to perform at least as well at any level elsewhere.

In NEST, best practices included relevant documents related to mentor profile or mentoring practices that describe what a mentor does and how he does it (e.g. vision and strategy of authorities/schools regarding mentoring) as well as relevant mentoring and mentor training materials (e.g. coaching tools, checklists, questionnaires, workshop outlines, mentor intervention frameworks, etc.). Teach for Belgium led the selection and collection of the best practices and worked in close collaboration with the “Teach” network (Teach for All, Empieza por Educar, Teach for Austria, Teach for Bulgaria and Teach for Romania), who have already worked on these topics internally and thus have available resources for this. The rationale for inclusion in the list of relevant best practices was mainly based on the three following factors; (1) The best practice concerns mentoring programs; (2) The relevance of the best practices for the development of the deliverables of the project; (3) The availability of ready-to-use tools in the best practices. For information and papers on local best practices, the project partners were requested to provide and share any best practices and reports about studies and experiments that were conducted in their local education systems. They were also asked to provide any relevant papers that offered insights into local challenges.

Evidence and best practices were used to develop the NEST framework for mentoring, which provided both a description of the mentoring as an activity, called the theory of



mentorship, as well as the description of the mentor as a person. In turn, the theory of mentorship is itself composed of two elements, the objectives of the mentoring activity and the description of the mentoring practice. The NEST mentoring framework included mainly three elements:

- **The mentoring objectives:** This described the overall objectives of the mentoring process for the adaptive support of novice teachers as part of the induction process. This gives a vision on what the NEST consortium believed to be the objective of mentoring starting teachers in the project.
- **The mentoring practice:** This described the mentoring practice and the overall mentoring style that was used in this project. It provides a description of how the mentor will mentor their mentees in the context of the NEST project (transformational vs. informational)
- **The mentor profile:** This described the attributes and competencies of the ideal NEST mentor. It showed who the consortium wanted to have as mentors and will served as a basis for drawing up the selection criteria.

In practice, a first step for interested education stakeholders and organisations to implement the NEST approach is to conduct research of international and national evidence, consult stakeholder in the area of implementation, identify best practices and key stakeholders to support the implementation. Below we outline resources from the NEST project that may help in this process:

- Refined and validated NEST theory of change to support project's implementation ([link](#))
- NEST toolbox of good practices for mentoring novice teachers in disadvantaged schools ([link](#))
- NEST mentoring framework ([link](#))
- NEST core curriculum for mentor intervention ([link](#))

## 4. How to recruit to ensure effective implementation of mentoring programmes?

If you wish to implement a mentoring program and have already developed the framing of your mentoring intervention and desired skills for the mentor training programme, it is now key to ensure that there are participants (future mentors) ready to benefit from them. The NEST partner organisations from Bulgaria, Austria, Belgium, Romania and Spain used the same methodology for recruiting and selecting the recipient schools. The proposed methodology worked with 3 variables that NEST found critical in the realities of each of the NEST Partners:

- the centralisation of decision-making of hiring;
- the constraints over the costs of the process;
- the quality / reliability of the selection process;

The NEST project developed three mentor recruitment models to guide national Recruitment & Selection processes. Each model varied in terms of centralization, costs, and reliability. The models were designed to help partners create effective selection processes within their national constraints and project budgets.

### **Local Identification Model**

- **Decentralized System:** This model was created for countries with decentralized educational systems where the Teach for- partner could not evaluate candidates directly.
- **Local Partners:** Schools, inspectorates, and teacher associations identified and evaluated candidates.
- **Targeted Recruitment:** Local partners selected mentors who already displayed the desired competencies.
- **Low Cost, Variable Reliability:** While cost-effective, the reliability of the selection process varied. To improve reliability, behaviors aligned with the Mentors Profile were proposed for easier candidate identification. Additional steps like workshops or further interviews were added.

### **Mass-Recruitment & Automated Evaluation Model**

- **High Scale and Efficiency:** This model was suitable for countries with high numerical objectives or many candidates.
- **Semi-Centralized:** Recruitment was done through both institutional partners and Teach for X channels. Candidates applied via an online form.
- **Automated Selection:** Candidates were evaluated based on the European Mentors Profile using an automated process. The reliability depended on the complexity of the application form, which could be adjusted to balance pass rates and candidate quality. Additional steps further increased reliability.

### **Centralized Evaluation & High Reliability Model**

- High-Quality Focus: This model was ideal for contexts where resource costs were not an issue and the focus was on selecting the highest quality candidates.
- Centralized Selection: All candidates went through standardized selection stages with trained evaluators using aligned tools.
- Online Interview: Included questions measuring all 11 dimensions of the mentor profile.
- Customizable: This model could be adjusted to lower costs or reduce centralization by incorporating elements from the Local Identification Model.

Based on the previous research work, NEST recruited its mentors based on a series of behaviours demonstrated by the right mentor candidates, which included:

- The mentor asks open questions, listens actively and understands and supports beginning teachers using examples from his experience
- The mentor has a constant concern for self-improvement, participates in different conferences/ workshops/ seminars about teaching, education and learning strategies for supporting the professional growth of others and is willing to integrate feedback in order to improve.
- The mentor does not have a superior attitude and shows respect and support for all people, expressing acceptance and openness and believes that all people can reach their potential.
- The mentor is patient and understands that growth is a process, respecting the particularities in the learning process
- The mentor wants to know as much as possible about his colleagues, asking questions, getting to know them personally and professionally, being open to different perspectives
- The mentor doesn't back down from possible conflicts or difficult conversations, approaching it with courage, empathy and transparency
- The mentor doesn't have a fixed mindset and is not attached to his own ideas, being open to integrate new methods.
- The mentor uses evidence-based approaches and actions when stating an argument
- The mentor understands the importance of self-reflection and is using it in their learning process
- The mentor listens to other's perspective without judging
- The mentor uses digital instruments in the learning process.

In practice, a second step for interested education stakeholders and organisations to implement the NEST approach is to develop a recruitment framework that defines the competencies of potential successful candidates. Below we outline resources from the NEST project that may help in this process:

- Recruitment and Selection Methodology for mentors and novice teachers ([link](#))
- Guidelines for working with novice teachers within the project ([link](#))

## 5. How to set up effective mentoring training?

NEST developed a professional development programme for experienced teachers (mentors). The aim of the programme was to train these teachers in mentoring skills so that they can provide professionalized support to novice teachers (mentees) in the schools where they worked.

Both face-to-face and online, NEST tutors (coaching experts working at the Teach For All network partner organizations) accompanied the mentors in their acquisition of skills and training of novice teachers. The NEST methodological model consisted of a strategic combination of methodologies, of which the fundamental ones were dual training (theory & practice), flipped classroom methodology, peer learning, and learning personalisation.

The **NEST mentor training** consisted of:

- **An orientation meeting:** At the beginning of each term there was an orientation meeting. These meetings were attended by the total group of mentors and mentees, and school principals were also invited.
- **An online platform:** The training content was carried out through the online platform of which each mentor and mentee were users. The training contained a combination of conceptual frameworks, specific strategies and tools, videos, support resources and learning verification activities.
- **Practice session with peers:** conducted online by small groups of (approximately) 10 mentors and a NEST tutor. These practice sessions with peers, mentors practiced different mentoring techniques guided by the tutors. Generating a **learning community** among the mentors was particularly relevant as participating in a network of teachers is one of the professional development practices that have the greatest impact on continuous teacher education (TALIS 2018).

The **NEST practice** consisted of:

- **Observation and feedback cycle**
  - **Observation of the mentee's practice:** Once a term, mentors carried out an observation and feedback cycle with each of their mentees. The cycle began with the mentor observing a class of their mentee. During the observation, which lasted at least 30 minutes, the mentor recorded evidence about the actions of the students, the teacher, and the design of the learning space, without taking an active role in the classroom dynamics.
  - **Planning of the mentoring conversation:** The mentor prepared the mentoring session, the mentor assisted the novice teacher's analysis of the learning and needs of the students in their class, their teaching skills, their ability to generate synergies with the community, and their own resilience. In this analysis, strengths and progress were highlighted. Priority areas for growth were also identified. The mentor guided and accompanied the mentee in the analysis process and in establishing next steps for improvement.
  - **Mentoring conversation:** In the first observation and feedback cycles of the course, the mentor was accompanied by a NEST tutor, who modeled the first

conversations. Then, the mentor progressively acquired autonomy in the mentoring conversations until they were carried out independently.

- **Progressive autonomy of the mentor**
  - **Reflection on practice with the tutor:** A NEST tutor gradually accompanied the mentors at first in person at the mentoring conversations and eventually through practice/reflection conversations took place online.
- **Mentor-mentee follow-up conversations**
  - In addition to the observation and feedback cycle itself, once per term each mentor met individually with each of their mentees. The aim of these conversations was to promote an informal support structure between mentor and mentee to follow up on the mentee's progress in implementing the agreed next steps.

The end of each term consisted of a Metacognition session, involving mentors and mentees. Large groups, with small group work instances, and both mentors and mentees will be invited. Mentors, mentees and NEST tutors reflected on their progress throughout the term.

From the NEST experience, it was concluded that blended learning can be a cost-effective and sustainable practice for the training and retention of mentors. This approach is beneficial in supporting novice teachers. However, it is crucial to allow mentors time within their working hours to develop these skills, rather than expecting them to do so on top of their usual responsibilities.

An example of this approach is the Sensei program, which was developed as part of the NEST project and builds on NEST principles. In the Sensei program, mentors spend 50% of their teaching hours on mentoring activities and skill development, while the remaining 50% is dedicated to their regular teaching duties. This balance ensures that mentors have sufficient time to grow their mentoring abilities and effectively support novice teachers.

### **Sensei – A New Policy Pilot to Support Novice Teachers through Mentoring, based on NEST Principles and Funded through ESF+**

In Spain, the successful engagement of NEST project partners in the pilot in Catalonia influenced regional education policy. As a result of the NEST awareness activities and outcomes, public authorities in Catalonia utilized European Social Funds to launch a novice teacher training and support program called “Sensei.”

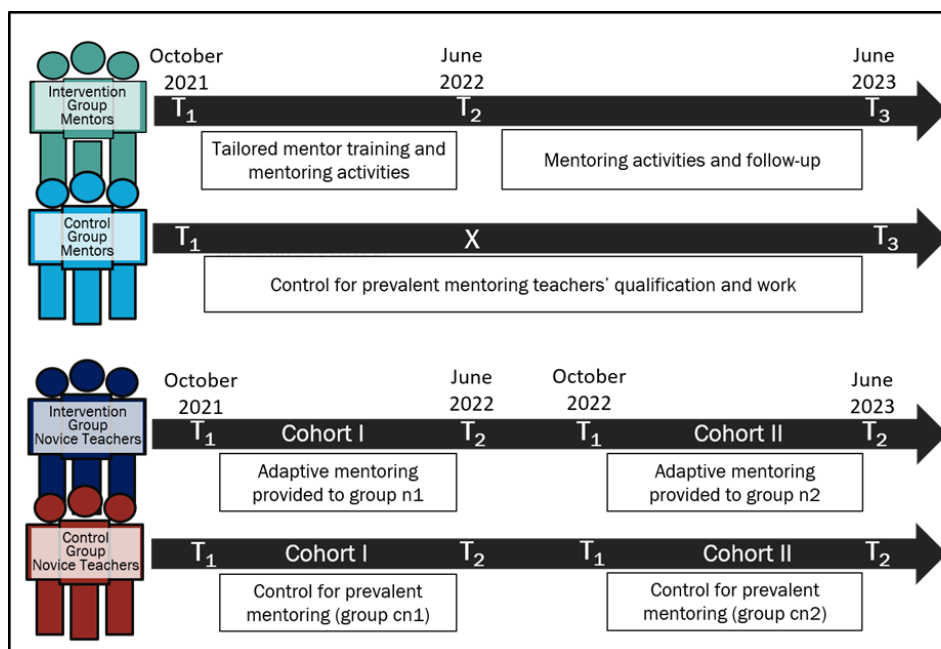
Sensei is an innovative program designed to provide high-quality support to novice teachers during their first year in the profession. Heavily influenced by the NEST project, it recognizes mentoring as a crucial tool to ensure that new teachers feel supported and empowered. NEST partners in the Catalan pilot, including Empieza por Educar and the Departament d’Ensenyament, formed a close partnership that allowed for thorough monitoring of NEST’s implementation across regions. This collaboration facilitated the exchange of best practices, identification of challenges, and implementation of risk mitigation strategies. The findings from the NEST evaluation informed the development and content of the Sensei program’s mentor training.

NEST and Sensei share similar objectives and logistical aspects. In Sensei, novice teachers, who are new to the profession, are paired with mentor teachers who provide personal and professional support. Over the next two years, 500 novice teachers will be able to make a greater impact on the learning and well-being of students from the start of their careers.

## 6. Why is evaluation important when upscaling the NEST model?

Assessing whether a given intervention is effective is hard (and even impossible) to achieve if the latter is not supported by a concrete evaluation of its impact. The general objective of evidence-based education is to have a positive impact on students and teachers. To inform related evaluation processes, it is key to gather and analyse data from at least following two groups of recipients: mentors (i.e. experienced teachers taking part in mentoring programmes) and direct recipients (i.e. novice teachers). For the purpose of the NEST project, the evaluation process followed this scheme:

The NEST consortium appointed an experienced external evaluator (University of Duisburg-Essen) to assess its effectiveness and impact. The evaluation of the NEST programme spanned two school years for mentors, and two cohorts of novice teachers for one year each, using online surveys to track mentor and novice teacher development. Control groups enabled comparisons with those who did not receive NEST training/mentors.



Results showcased the NEST mentor training improved mentors' ability to adapt to novice teachers' needs, and increased enthusiasm and self-assessed competence of mentors. On the other front, novice teachers with NEST mentors reported better-focused mentoring and higher mentor competence. Lastly, NEST novice teachers showed increased teaching competence, professional resilience, and willingness to stay in the profession.

When designing a mentoring program, it is crucial to ensure that an evaluation team is in place. The evaluation should be designed alongside the mentoring program and should

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begin before the intervention starts to accurately measure its real impact. Below, we outline resources from the NEST project that may help in this process:

- Year 1 Evaluation report: This is a combined report of two deliverables: a) a systematic description of mentoring approaches for novice teachers with regard to current mentoring practices in participating countries; b) The report presents a description of the design and the instruments for the quasi-experimental evaluation. Further, it provides an account of the implementation of mentor and teacher recruitment strategies within the policy experiment, including a needs assessment for mentoring from the perspective of novice teachers ([link](#))
- Year 2 Evaluation Report: The report provides descriptive data analyses on the baseline data of mentors (intervention group) and mentor teachers (control group), personal preconditions, such as teaching and mentoring experience as well as preferred mentoring styles and used mentoring methodology, etc. It also includes an appraisal of the mentoring from the perspective of the intervention group of mentors ([link](#))
- Final evaluation report: The report examines the sustainability of the mentor training and the effectiveness of the mentoring ([link](#))
- Executive Summary report in all project languages ([link](#))

## 7. NEST policy recommendations

During the project lifetime, the NEST consortium, project participants and other stakeholders considered the overall question of how effective mentoring should look in order to support novice teachers that work in disadvantaged contexts. Based on our experience implementing the NEST project, monitoring and analysing evaluation data, and the project consortium has drawn up the following general recommendations for action at the national and EU level:

- **At the local, regional, and national level**
  - Provide novice teachers with structured mentoring during their first years to a, especially to those working in disadvantaged contexts
  - Select mentors on the basis of a competency model which goes beyond knowledge or experience, and promote skills and mindsets that place focus on constant learning, emotional intelligence, empathy and collaboration.
  - Provide mentors with rigorous, structured and stacked training which allows them to build the kind of toolbox they need to be effective in their role of support. Trainings should include topics like building trust, effective lesson observation, having difficult conversations, mapping next steps, goal setting, effective follow up among others.
  - Encourage and support the creation of professional learning communities for mentor professional development, collaboration, and challenge resolution. These should be created through meaningful and effective channels.
  - Education systems should develop a long-term strategy to integrate evidence-based innovative approaches that support teacher well-being and professional development
- **At the EU level**
  - Mentoring and novice teacher support should be included in upcoming EU-strategies and Recommendations.
  - The European Commission should keep supporting the development of evidence-base policy across the EU through KA3 Erasmus+ policy experimentation projects in school education to support the achievement of the EEA by 2030.

### **The new Law of Education of Romania mentions the NEST project and places mentoring at the core of the teaching career**

In Romania, Teach For Romania experts were part of the working groups for improving the existing legislation for education around the role of the teacher and the need to increase initial and continuous training and support. As a result of the fruitful co-design and implementation by the Ministry of Education and Teach For Romania, the NEST results were used to feed in the Law of Education that was enacted on September 2023, which ensures mentoring is at the core of the teaching career.



## 8. Conclusion

Exploitation is a long-term effort which requires deep levels of understanding of the policies recommended. NEST's unique strength lies in its ability to reimagine a long-standing policy (mentoring) and offer a proposal for strengthening and improving its impact. By proposing interventions at each level of the system, from schools to the whole administration, the project has the potential to not just improve novice teacher retention but also add to the toolkit of career teachers. In order to benefit from these opportunities though efforts must be made to ensure that public authorities and decision makers retain a long-term interest and investment in the project.