

Call for Contributions

**open till
March 31**

& Save the Date

November 13 and 14, 2026

**Campus St. Pölten
near Vienna, Austria**

International Conference

**“Social Mentoring in Europe:
Prospects for Social Inclusion
and Engagement”**



Co-funded by
the European Union



Over the past 15 years, social mentoring programs have spread throughout Europe as an innovative and person-centered form of social intervention. These initiatives support individuals facing social disadvantages, complement existing welfare structures, and create new pathways for social inclusion. At their core lies the development of a meaningful relationship between mentors and mentees — relationships that fosters guidance, support, and shared learning through trust and mutual recognition. In doing so, mentoring contributes to social cohesion, strengthens democratic competencies, and cultivates opportunities for engagement across diverse communities.

Many programs rely on volunteers from civil society. Increasingly, however, businesses, schools, universities, and public institutions are joining this movement, enriching mentoring with new resources, contexts, and responsibilities.

The Growing Significance of Research and Innovation in Building Our Future

Research and innovation are urgently needed for the sustainable development of the field. Higher education institutions are especially well positioned to bridge science, practice, and civic engagement and to nurture the emerging ecosystems. Today, we have a timely opportunity to deepen collaboration and strengthen social mentoring as a joint endeavor:

- Practitioners are innovating and professionalizing their programs, including by gathering data.
- Researchers are generating and sharing knowledge to promote reflection, quality, impact, and governance.
- Policy makers and funders are showing growing interest in scaling up effective programs.

We therefore need shared spaces where practitioners and academics can take stock, identify common challenges, and shape future visions together. In response to this need, the conference aims to explore how social mentoring can advance at the organizational, local, national, and European levels. We will discuss how we can collaboratively strengthen the field within broader welfare, migration, and education systems.

Your Expertise Shapes Our Agenda!

We invite researchers and practitioners from around the world to co-create our program based on:

- empirical or theoretical research on social mentoring across different disciplines,
- data collection and knowledge production in programs, service and umbrella organizations, and funding agencies,
- innovative program designs and emerging features, along with advocacy efforts and strategic developments,
- cross-sector collaborations and participatory approaches.

Send your proposal by **March 31, 2026**, using the submission form for this “**Call for Contributions**” at <https://www.suttneruni-symposium.at>

Notification of acceptance will be provided by mid-May.

Your Ideas, Your Format—Our Shared Space

This conference is designed as a high-engagement arena. We aim to enable dialogue between newcomers and experienced actors. We invite a broad range of proposals covering diverse topics. We especially encourage you to bring your own ideas for how sessions can be designed and facilitated:

- Contribute to a **thematic discussion panel**, where you bring your expertise into a conversation with others.
- Pitch your findings or highlight emerging issues in a **spotlight session** crafted to spark curiosity.
- Host a **hands-on workshop**, inviting participants to explore methods and innovations.
- Present your program at our **project marketplace**, where you can meet people face-to-face at your stand.
- Showcase your work in our **poster exhibition**, discussing your presentation during guided knowledge walks.
- Propose **your own formats and ideas**—ranging from art-based and performative contributions to podcast recordings, interactive sessions on lived experience, or inclusive and participatory approaches.

The full description of invited formats can be found at: <https://www.suttneruni-symposium.at/call/>



Who Should Attend?

The conference welcomes:

- Junior and senior researchers, lecturers and members of the university leadership
- Staff, mentors and mentees of social mentoring programs as well as their community partners
- Stakeholders from public administration, companies, educational institutions, and religious communities
- Policy makers, funders, social service organizations and civic engagement actors
- Students and alumni

We hope our event will help stimulate a new interdisciplinary field of “Social Mentoring Studies”, where emerging and established researchers collaborate in engaged ways with practitioners to advance knowledge and impact.

The Conference Convenors on behalf of the Program Committee:

- Prof. Eberhard Raithelhuber, Project Manager
- Dr. med. Marija Mitic, Assistant to the Project Manager

ERASMUS+ Cooperation Partnership “Mentoring for Social Inclusion in Europe: Sharing Knowledge and Building Capacity” (Ment4EU, 2023-2026), <https://www.socialmentoring.org/>

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Social Mentoring in Europe: Prospects for Social Inclusion and Engagement

November
13-14, 2026

Bertha von Suttner
Private University

Campus St. Pölten near
Vienna, Austria



Organization and Patronage

The conference is organized in cooperation with the Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnership “Mentoring for Social Inclusion in Europe: Sharing Knowledge and Building Capacity” (2023–2026) – Ment4EU – as well as colleagues from across Europe, with support from the Mentoring Europe network. Korinna Schumann, Austrian Federal Minister of Labor, Social Affairs, Health, Care, and Consumer Protection, has assumed patronage of the event.

Practical

The conference will take place on the Campus St. Pölten near Vienna.

- Start: Friday, November 13, at 9:00 local time, end: Saturday, November 14, at 16:00.
- 35 minutes from Vienna Central Station, 1 hour from the airport.
- Participation fees will be announced by March 2026, the final program in June.
- Conference website: www.suttneruni-symposium.at; [✉ conference@suttneruni.at](mailto:conference@suttneruni.at)

International Training Program “Mentoring for Social Inclusion: Introductory Course” (9–14 November)

The conference will be preceded by the Erasmus+ Blended Intensive Programme “Mentoring for Social Inclusion: Introductory Course” for students and staff. This freestanding continuing education course begins on Monday, November 9 (late afternoon) and then transitions into the conference. Independent participants—such as newcomers to the field of practice or research—are also welcome. Information about this micro-credential (5 ECTS credit weight) will be available by the end of March. For inquiries regarding Erasmus+ partnerships or course participation, please contact:

[✉ internationaloffice@suttneruni.at](mailto:internationaloffice@suttneruni.at)