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NAVIGATING LEADERSHIP SKILLS IN A RAPIDLY EVOLVING EUROPE

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SYNTHESIS

Newsletter Article - A Mentor Is Not a Hero. She Is a Bridge

Activity leader	EMPRESAS CON VALORES
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Mentorship is often described in grand terms. We imagine the mentor as a source of wisdom, a role model, someone who has already arrived and can show others the way.

That image is not wrong, but it is incomplete.

For Girls Who Lead, mentorship is not about placing one person on a pedestal. It is about building bridges. Between experience and possibility. Between skills and confidence. Between one girl's progress and another girl's first step.

This is why the project includes a GirlLeaders Mentors' Guide as one of its planned results. The guide is designed to support mentors who want to inspire young girls, but also girls who may become mentors for others. That second part is especially important. It means the project does not see girls only as beneficiaries. It sees them as future actors in a wider support system.

That is a more powerful idea than it may first appear.

Many young girls need to see leadership close up before they can imagine it for themselves. Not as something distant, formal or reserved for exceptional people, but as a practice that can begin in ordinary settings: a classroom, a youth activity, a community project, a conversation with peers.

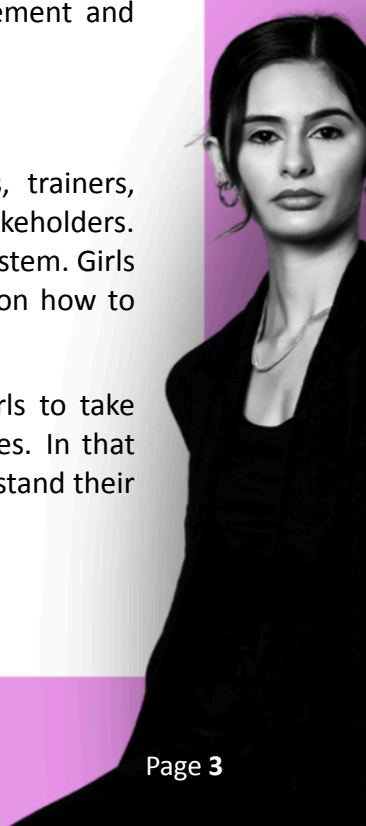
Mentorship can make leadership feel less abstract. A good mentor does not simply say, "You can do it." She helps a girl understand what "doing it" might actually involve. She asks questions. She listens carefully. She helps identify strengths. She makes uncertainty feel manageable. She gives feedback without taking ownership away.

Girls Who Lead places mentorship within a broader learning pathway. The project aims to support young girls in developing leadership competences connected to entrepreneurship, digital transformation, sustainability, social responsibility and emotional skills. But competences do not grow in isolation. They grow through practice, encouragement and reflection.

That is where mentors matter.

The project's target groups include not only young girls, but also mentors, trainers, educators, NGOs, organisations advocating women's rights and educational stakeholders. This shows that Girls Who Lead understands leadership development as an ecosystem. Girls need tools, but the adults and organisations around them also need guidance on how to support girls effectively.

There is also a civic dimension. Girls Who Lead aims to encourage young girls to take initiative, engage with social challenges and become active in their communities. In that context, mentorship is not only about career advice. It is about helping girls understand their ability to contribute.



Perhaps the most interesting part of the project is the possibility of girls mentoring other girls. Peer influence can be incredibly strong at this age. When a girl sees someone close to her take initiative, speak up or lead a team, leadership becomes less distant. It becomes imaginable.

A mentor does not need to be a hero.

Sometimes, she only needs to be the bridge that helps someone cross from “I am not sure I belong here” to “I do belong here since I have something to contribute!”

That is the kind of mentorship Girls Who Lead wants to make possible.

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