



OUTPUT 1

INTERNSHIP BEST PRACTICES

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Internships are being implemented differently in different countries, different organisations and with different actors being involved. This document presents the compilation of different practices, gathered from employers, organisations, trade unions and other relevant stakeholders involved in this field.

An internship is a means to offer a concrete work experience to individuals who are either newly entering or re-entering the labor market, by putting learning at the center, giving them the opportunity of finding their professional field(s) of interest(s) and enhancing their employability.

It is conducted either for academic purposes and/or for professional development during a limited time period. It is organized in advance to provide structured learning through practical experience and leads to the recognition of learning outcomes, under the supervision of a professional with a significant background in the field of the experience.

Aimed at increasing learner's competences and obtaining skills relevant for the labor market, it consists of activities that are connected with the area of study or professional development. Internships may cover student or graduate placements in companies, practical work-experience oriented projects, traineeship and other relevant activities.

Within the framework of SPRINT project, the focus is mainly on high level qualifications attained by young people who integrate the labor market.

In this document, a practical classification has been made: before, during and after the internship.

1. BEFORE THE INTERNSHIP

a. Written agreement signed by all the parties concerned (intern, host organization, higher education institution)

Providing written agreement among relevant parties ensure greater security for all parties being involved.

Practices show various solutions on this:

Parties being involved.

Some foreseen a written and binding agreement or contract between:

- Bipartite contract between: Learner/intern and employer
- Tripartite contract between: Student/intern, the employer and the educational institution (faculty)

In some of the cases, the agreement is obligatory.

Subject of a written agreement may include:

- Names of all the parties included (the learner, the home educational institution, the employer)
- indicating clearly the location of the work placement
- the period of the placement
- the work to be undertaken
- rights and duties of all parties
- expected learning objectives
- remuneration/ salary
- social insurance coverage
- scope of potential projects that might be addressed
- goals of internship
- credit points (when relevant)

In some cases, the legislation of the host country and the employment contract or the convention apply.



b. Social protection of students during their internship (by the higher education institution or by the host organization)

Social protection of interns should be ensured. It can be ensured by different ways and by different actors (either employer/ educational provider or automatically by law or system) and can cover different aspects (sickness insurance, civic liability insurance, accident insurance).

- Inclusion of the intern in the social security system, especially those of health, unemployment, pension systems.
- Informing the intern of their social and labour rights, their responsibilities towards the organisation and any health and safety risks in the work place. Interns should be informed at the beginning of their internship of their social and labour rights and all other rights relevant to their social protection.
- Ensuring that interns are covered by an insurance policy will protect trainees from unforeseen accidents at work and compensate if an unfortunate situation arises
- Providing accident/liability insurance: provided by the intern/parent/guardian/school
- Automobile accident insurance: provided by the intern/parent/guardian/school
- Providing interns with European Health Insurance Card certifying them with the rights to health insurance and allows, during a temporary stay in Europe, to benefit from the taking into charge medical care if necessary.
- Unless exempt under the Social Security law, employers must deduct Social Security taxes from the wages of all student-employees/interns.
- Sometimes higher education institution provides logistical support to students concerning social security cover and insurance

In some cases, youth may be covered by their parents' social security or insurance. When this is not the case, interns should be covered by their employers' workplace insurance policy.

2. DURING THE INTERNSHIP

a. Legal duration of the internship (hours, months, rest and night work)

Time period of an internship can vary from some week, to over a year. There is no clear definition, how long the internship should be. The duration is mostly defined in a way that is meaningful and educational for the intern in order to gain required competences or practical experiences to be able to perform the job independently. It should not be too long and it should not replace regular employees.

Principles in defining the scope of internship:

- Internships may be part-time or full-time;
- Duration of training defined according to the rules of each European country
- Length and tasks of the internship correspond to specified learning objectives that are shared with the student at the beginning of his internship
- not excessive working hours
- Employers must Guarantee respect for the legal rights of trainees in terms of working conditions (e.g. hours of work, holidays)"

b. Legal income, remunerations and reimbursement

Legal income:

- In some countries the unpaid internship is banned.
- In some countries the minimum for payment is national minimum wage
- Compiling with all current employment legislation provisions of each country.
- In Slovenia the minimum wage for internship should not be lower than 70% of a regular salary for this job position and this should not be lower than the minimum wage in the country.



Remuneration is highly recommended and increasingly seen as best practice across the scope. An internship should be as close to a real-life work experience as possible and, of course, being paid is a core part of this. A paid internship is more likely to ensure that employers are able to attract a high calibre and engaged intern. It will also ensure that the internship programme is inclusive as it will not deter those who are less able to cover the costs associated with living and working, such as travel, food, office clothing.

"Paying interns is not only the right thing to do, but it also helps to widen access to internships more generally to ensure inclusion on one side and on the other side to increase the pool of talent that employers can draw from.

Principles:

- fairly remunerated for the work they carry out
- decent remuneration for work carried out additional to the requirements outlined in the internship contract
- paying compensation for overtime
- decent remuneration not below the EU poverty line
- 60% of median income

Offering benefits in addition to pay is possible in a form of:

- Contributions towards study and exam costs
- Study and/or exam leave
- Paid or unpaid holiday entitlement

Reimbursement or interns' compensations:

If the internship is unpaid, compensation in other forms should be applied:

- offering a stipend
- reimbursement of costs accrued during the internship (food, housing, traveling)
- or right to receive food, housing, and public transportation tickets should be provided

Higher education institution should provide logical support to students concerning travel arrangements, visa, accommodation, residence or work permits

Most successful internship programs offer comparable hourly wages, stipends, licensing, and tuition reimbursement.

c. Supervision of interns

Providing a support to interns is essential for quality of an internship and for a quality of the learning outcomes and personal and professional development of an intern.

Several practices can be put in place to ensure that:

Supervision of students by the tutors of higher education institution

Higher education institution should supervise trainees throughout the duration of their internships, so that their experiences have as much educational value as possible.

- in advance defined specific measurable learning objectives and expected outcomes
- providing guidance of competent supervisor
- Periodically reaching out to professors and regular meetings with their supervisor to monitor progress (monthly assessment, mid-term review)
- communication with the sending higher education institution about any problem or changes regarding the placement
- conducting site visits from higher education at least once a month, if possible, to observe youth at work and ensure they are performing tasks related to their training.
- upon request from the student or supervisor, help resolve any difficulties that may arise
- Ensuring academic staff has training for work placement supervision and management



Supervision of students by the tutors of host organizations

Supervision, support to the interns can be done in different forms and by different people. A mentor can enhance the experience of an internship for both employer and intern. Mentors must have the time necessary to mentor a student. Ideally, they should be an accountant so they can share their own experience and journey. Mentors should work in the same department as the intern so they have a good understanding of the work the intern is involved with. Mentors serve as several roles. These roles can be names differently in differed working environments, such as supervisor or a mentor. Nevertheless, whoever in the host organisation is in charge for those things, several practices can be put in place.

- in advance defined specific measurable learning objectives and expected outcomes
- dedicated person with sufficient time in their work schedule to act as a supervisor and mentor that should be adequately trained
- providing ongoing guidance, constructive feedback and support as well as access to a professional network.
- providing frequent feedback
- conducting regular performance reviews based on the intern's learning objectives
- agreeing and revising the learning objectives for the internship with the intern
- appointing a mentor to advise students, help them with their integration in the host environment and monitor their training progress
- familiarizing intern with the organization,
- providing clear assignments
- dedicating a “contact” person for questions
- involving intern in scums/meetings
- discussion of the possibilities to be hired as a permanent employee during the internships period
- limited number of interns per internship provider
- At monitoring meetings interns may also:
 - report on a project's/role status
 - ask questions
 - learn how their work is contributing to the organisation
 - participate in evaluating their strengths
 - discuss areas needing growth and development
 - get insight about what work lies ahead.

3. AFTER THE INTERNSHIP

a. Evaluation

- Evaluation by the intern and by the supervisor, mentor, employer and/or parties relevant
- There should be a mid-term evaluation with clear evaluation criteria of internships period
- Intern submit a report in the specified format and any required supporting document at the end of the placement
- supervisor in the host organization has to complete an evaluation of the interns performance which will be shared with the intern
- Interns should assess the:
 - The programme
 - Their supervisor/ mentor
 - employer's ability to successfully host interns,
 - the usefulness of their internship relative to their career goals,
 - whether the training curriculum prepared them adequately for the experience
 - business as a whole



- At the end of the internship an official formal performance review should be developed o evaluate the interns involvement
- At the end of the internship both interns and employers should provide feedback through standardized evaluation forms.
- Ideally be done face-to-face and followed up with a written summary.

b. Validation of the internship

- Outcomes and processes should be systematically documented
- Assessing and defining the specific learning goals and quality objectives identified during the planning stages of the experience,
- Providing an intern with a letter of reference,
- a written certification by employer that includes the tasks completed, skills learnt, experience acquired and an overview of the intern's performance as a whole
- interns can develop an internship portfolio of their experience

An internship may or may not carry credit.

If internships are required to complete the programme, it is part of students' learning outcomes and workload and necessitate an allocation of credit.

- the number of credits allocated to the work placement should be included within the overall number of credits for the particular academic year
- university credits count as an academic or extracurricular semester course
- Clear procedures for assessing Learning Outcomes and awarding credits

SOURCES

- Euroguidance
- European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships
- An Employers' guide to quality internships
- Common best practice code for high-quality internships
- ECTS Users' Guide
- Student workload and learning outcomes
- Transition from School to Work : Internships and First Entry to the Labour Market in Croatia
- Internship best practices
- Internship best practices manual
- Employer Internship Guide
- Promoting youth employment through internships : a guide to best practices
- Inclusive internship programs : A How-to Guide for employers
- Employer guide to structuring a successful internship program
- Internships that work
- Academic standards and best practices for internships
- "Conference : Quality Traineeships in the EU - Youth Guarantee, European Solidarity Corps and beyond 10 november 2017"
- Hiring an intern : ACCA's best practice guide for employers
- 10 Best practices for Intern and Trainee Host
- Quality traineeships
- "Apprenticeship and Traineeship Schemes in EU27 : Key Success Factors"
- Council recommendation on quality framework for Traineeships (10th March 2014)
- European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)