



## SPRINT OUPUT 5

### HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS 'S GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY INTERNSHIPS

Based on Sprint's project results

July 2020

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**Disclaimer:** this guide is intended for educational institutions as a training institution. When higher education institutions are hosting interns, they are invited to consult the guide for implementation process of quality internships for host organizations.

The guide is available in the following versions :

- [English](#) version
- [French](#) version
- [Italian](#) version
- [Slovene](#) version
- [German](#) version

## INTRODUCTION

The use and evolution of internships has increased significantly over the past decades as a means for companies to access a talent pool<sup>1</sup>, for people to gain relevant skills and experience and to integrate the labour market. For higher education institutions when they are involved, internships have many advantages: link with business, employability of their students, increase in their reputation...

According to a Eurobarometer survey, four out of ten people in the age group 18-35 have had at least one internship experience and amongst those, up to 21% have had four or more (European Commission, Flash Eurobarometer 378, November 2013). Actually, out of 4,5 million students and graduates doing an internship each year in Europe: 30% have no learning content, 59% are unpaid, less than 46% of those who are paid received a financial compensation sufficient to cover basic living costs and only 27% of interns received a job offer after their internship<sup>2</sup>

However, not all internships fulfil their purposes. That's why an increasing interest from all stakeholders, especially Higher education institutions when they are involved, has resulted in looking for solutions for improving quality internships<sup>3</sup>.

The SPRINT project was set up to create a "European Quality framework for Internships" based on these different initiatives, that will be recognized and accepted by all types of organizations that could offer internships. The material result being the publication of the CWA<sup>4</sup> on European Criteria for Quality Internships that outlines quality criteria to ensure that internships are of value to both host organizations and interns.<sup>5</sup>

The first step was to create a definition of an internship, which appears in the CWA:

**Internship** means to offer a concrete work-based learning experience to individuals (students or non-students) who are either newly entering or re-entering the labor market, by putting applied learning outside university with the intention of intensively integrating academic knowledge with practical experience 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 and applied learning through practical experience and leads to the recognition of learning outcomes, under the supervision of a professional(s) 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.

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<sup>1</sup> A guide has been made especially for host organizations : [link](#)

<sup>2</sup> (European Commission, Flash Eurobarometer 378, November 2013 and Flash Eurobarometer 278, November 2014).

<sup>3</sup> Example : French guide : [evaluation of the quality of an internship by a student](#) – January 2019

<sup>4</sup> CWA stands for "CEN Workshop Agreement", CEN being the European Committee for Standardization. A CWA is a document agreed by the participants of a CEN Workshop, which offers a common and reliable agreement upon a framework (Source: CEN GUIDE 29). A CWA does not have the status of a European Standard. It involves no obligation at national level.

<sup>5</sup> [SOURCE: SPRINT's partners, based on the European general report] *Note 1 to entry: Different terminologies are used to refer to an internship in different countries. For example, the terms "traineeship" and "apprenticeship" may be understood like internship as long as what is meant by these terms corresponds exactly to the definition of internship as described in this document<sup>5</sup>.*

Internships may cover: student or graduate placements in companies; practical work-experience oriented projects; traineeship; and other relevant activities

This guideline is based on the Sprint's results<sup>6</sup> and aims to help higher education institutions for improving quality's internships.

## **A. Advantages of good internships for HEI**

Different advantages exist in using quality's internships in the HEI's curricula as in host organizations<sup>7</sup>.

### **1. Learning by doing and enhancing soft skills in a professional context**

Internships allow interns to apply the acquired knowledge during education and to develop transversal skills in the work environment, bringing new/external opinions and points of view by bridging innovations between the education/training sector and the world of work.

### **2. Improve students' employability**

Including internships in curricula helps higher education institutions:

- To increase the student's employability<sup>8</sup> : an internship is an efficient way to identify potential future employees and can be used as a "pre-recruitment program". According to the 2013 Eurobarometer survey, seven out of ten former interns stated that their internship experience was or will be useful in their employment search. Internships allow a host organization to introduce the intern to the organization's particular context, values and job that the intern could potentially be hired for. This significantly reduces the on-boarding time as no further probation period is needed.
- To develop the professionalization of courses: connecting training with practice has become essential to increase the chances of finding a job for a learner

### **3. Development of relationships with businesses and the local, national and even international economic environment during all the phases of an internship**

**Before the internship:**

- Transparent advertising of the internship opportunity or intern's application is an opportunity for creating links between academic and the working world.
- Knowledge of the economic and social environment helps internship services, teachers and the academic tutor to better help students in their research and in the definition of the learning outcomes to be acquired

**During the internship,** the academic tutor will be in charge of different tasks including relationships with the host organization. For example, they might be responsible for organization of learning activities and their recognition of credits associated with learning outcomes. The academic tutor may also conduct site visits to meet the host organization's tutor, observe the intern at the host

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<sup>6</sup> For more information go to part III

<sup>7</sup> Source : Guide for implementation process of quality internships for host organizations

<sup>8</sup> Example : [Internship and employability prospects: assessing student's work readiness](#)

organization and ensure that he/she is performing tasks related in the agreement. Host organizations should make reasonable arrangements to support visits by academic tutors where requested and appropriate.

**At the termination** of the internship, the educational organization should organize a dedicated time to discuss and exchange on the internship with the intern and the host organization, validate skillsets gained and/or learning outcomes achieved, in line, notably with the learning outcomes specified in the legal agreement or other document established at the start of the internship. They can also identify the points that can be included in the diploma supplement<sup>9</sup>.

#### **4. Improve the HEI's reputation amongst host organizations.**

Internships can be a win-win experience, for all the parties, especially the HEI. Indeed, ensuring the preparation and monitoring of a quality's internship allows the HEI to improve its reputation in the socio-economic fabric.

Examples: clearly foresee the skills to be acquired, the contact of the academic tutor, the contact in case of accident, plan a meeting with the host organizations after the internship, promote the host organization during the graduation ceremony.

#### **5. Empowering academic tutor's management skills**

Internships enable the academic tutor to develop his-her tutoring, supervising and management skills. The academic tutor can have an evaluation on his/her work as tutor in his/her career.<sup>10</sup>

In a nutshell, internships bring value to a higher education institution and should, to this end, be subject to a monitored framework involving all stakeholders; a well-defined framework will significantly boost the internship's benefits for all. The CEN Workshop Agreement on European Criteria for Quality Internships therefore focuses on the implementation of good practices to define optimal internship frameworks.

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<sup>9</sup> The **Diploma Supplement** [pdf] is produced by higher education institutions according to standards agreed by the Commission, the Council of Europe and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). It is also part of the **Europass framework transparency tools**.

<sup>10</sup> For examples of valuation : Realise – realizing the potential of the international mobility of staff in higher education //realise-erasmusplus.fr

# GUIDE ON QUALITY INTERNSHIPS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS SERVICES

A quality internship brings added value for all stakeholders. For higher education institutions, it is a hands-on way to learn, during the training, professional and soft skills in a host organization rather than in a classroom; an enhancement of students' employability; a way for the development of relationships with businesses and local, national and even international economic environment during all the phases of an internship; an improvement of the HEI's reputation amongst host organizations and it can Empowering academic tutor's management skills.

This guide was made to implement quality criteria for internships. The European quality criteria for internships have been established within the framework of the Sprint's project. They are detailed in the CWA<sup>11</sup> : **recruitment, written agreement, remuneration, skills development, tutoring, career development and employment, work environment and working conditions, social protection and insurance.**

A check list was created at the end of the guide, to help HEI to put in practice the Sprint's criteria.

## A. Prepare the internships

### 1. Recruitment :

The HEI internship's service or equivalent can prepare students by helping them to look for internship offers and write a good application.

- Selection of offers :

Enlarging the sourcing channels by making sure that the students have access to several internship offers sourcing channels from different universities, areas, education levels and countries.

The best way to do this is to search internship offers on different job platforms (such as the European Job Mobility Portal - EURES<sup>12</sup> or EUROPASS<sup>13</sup>) or on social media platforms.

The internship should be built on the free choice of both parties and be agreed by all parties.

- Preparation and publication of the student's application :

Prepare the students to have an attractive presentation (such as the EUROPASS new website):

- Help them to create their personal record of all their skills, qualifications and experiences
- Help them to prepare and keep track of applications and cover letters for different courses and studies.

### 2. Written agreement:

The HEI internship's service or equivalent has to be sure that the written agreement is including the following items and is signed before the beginning of the internship.

The rights and obligations of all stakeholders included shall be clearly set out in a written agreement or contract.

All the items included in the agreement have to be respected by both the host organization and the higher education institution, based on the CWA and the guide for implementation process of quality internships for host organizations.

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<sup>11</sup> Direct link with the Cen Workshop Agreement : [https://www.cencenelec.eu/research/CWA/Documents/CWA17541\\_2020.pdf](https://www.cencenelec.eu/research/CWA/Documents/CWA17541_2020.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/eures/public/fr/homepage>

<sup>13</sup> <https://europa.eu/europass/en/work-europe>

**CHECKLIST ON WHAT THE WRITTEN AGREEMENT SHALL INCLUDE:**

1. Signatories of all the parties included (the intern, the host organization and the representative from the home educational institution, when relevant, and other parties involved, when applicable)
2. Identification of tutors who will guide them throughout the duration of the internship
3. Duration : the length of the internship
4. Schedule: expected working hours or presence hours and timetable
5. Description of the role and the tasks of both, the intern and the host organization
6. Learning objectives and skills to be developed
7. Remuneration
8. Information on workers' representation and collective agreements (when relevant)

**It is also recommended to include the following information:**

9. Clear indications on the location of the internship
10. Rights and duties of all parties
11. Social insurance coverage
12. Credit points (when relevant)

Each item has to be defined with the host organization, especially:

- Identification of tutors who will guide them throughout the duration of the internship

Tutoring shall always be provided by the host organization and the higher education institution. Tutors should be involved in complaint processes, providing support in case of problems or changes regarding the internship.

- Duration : the length of the internship

The internship shall be limited to a minimum duration of 2 months and to a maximum duration of 6 months. Exceptions for shorter or longer internships can apply:

- 1) If the education institution designed a specific curriculum requiring internships inferior to 2 months or exceeding 6 months. This is the case for Erasmus+ internships which can last up to 12 months;
- 2) If the internship is followed by an employment contract.

The internship agreement can be prematurely terminated by any party in the occurrence of one or more of the following events:

- Breach of the agreement or of any relevant regulations
- Misconduct or malevolence
- Repeated unjustified absence of the intern
- Endangerment of the physical or psychological health of the intern

In such cases, the revoking party shall inform the other party(ies) through a letter stating the reason for the explanation.

- Schedule: expected working hours or presence hours and timetable

Interns shall benefit at least from the resting time established by the national legislation or the sectoral collective agreement :

- A limit to weekly working hours
- the average working time for each seven day period must not exceed 48 hours, including overtime
- depending on national legislation and/or collective agreements, the 46 hour average is calculated over a reference period of up to 4, 6 or 12 months

- A rest break during working hours if the worker is on duty for longer than 6 hours
  - A minimum daily rest period
  - in every 24 hours a worker is entitled to a minimum of 11 consecutive hours of rest
  - A minimum weekly rest period
  - for each 7-day period a worker is entitled to a minimum of 24 uninterrupted hours in addition to the 11 hours' daily rest
  - Paid leave of at least 2 weeks per 6 months
  - Extra protection in case of night work
  - average working hours must not exceed 8 hours per 24-hour period
  - night workers must not perform heavy or dangerous work for longer than 8 hours in any 24-hour period
  - night workers have the right to free health assessments and, under certain circumstances, to transfer to day work
- Description of the role and the tasks of the intern, the host organization and the higher education institution (see above for the tutors)
  - Learning objectives and skills to be developed
    - When defining the internship offer and position, the expected learning outcomes should be defined in collaboration between the host organization and the academic organization.
    - Before the internship , clear learning outcomes shall be defined in line with the formal requirements of the educational organization and referenced to an EQF level.

- Information on workers' representation and collective agreements (when relevant)

Interns shall have access to a complaint channel to report abuses. This complaint channel can be at the host organization, at the academic institution, at a trade union present in the company, at a third party such as an intern organization or similar, or elsewhere. Trade unions at company level, where they exist, shall also be involved in the monitoring of the working conditions of the interns.

- Rights and duties of all parties

Examples :

- Social or other advantages for the intern (if relevant)
- Intellectual property (of relevant)
- Disciplinary proceedings (if relevant)

- Social insurance coverage

In case of parental leave, accident or long lasting illness, interns shall have the right to return to their internship at the host organization, either in the original internship position or a suitable alternative. The host organization and the interns can also jointly decide to end the internship in such cases.

Interns shall be included in the social security system, especially those of health, unemployment, and pension systems, especially if the internship is taking place outside/after formal education. The higher education institution shall ensure that the intern is covered for social security services, civil liability, medical treatment, sick leave, accidents including the accidents at the workplace resulting in disabilities.

**Practical kit: documents to be signed, to have, etc...**



This practical kit shall include:

- The agreement
- Social protection's attestations (European health insurance card)
- Insurance's attestations (when relevant)
- Prepared written statement validating and recognizing learning outcomes or recommendation letter
  - o A summary of the responsibilities and work performed
  - o Experience obtained through internship responsibilities
  - o Skills developed through internship roles (learning outcomes)
  - o Intent of the host organization to serve as a professional reference
- List of contacts in the higher education institution (when relevant)
- Presentation of the higher education institution (when relevant)

### **3. Remuneration**

The HEI internship's service or equivalent can advise the student on the remuneration<sup>14</sup>.

Interns shall receive remuneration for their work whatever the duration of the internship. In order to make internships accessible and inclusive, appropriate and fair remuneration shall be defined. If this remuneration is lower than that of other employees of the host organization, it should still reflect the work done by the interns while acknowledging the educational and developmental aspect of an internship.

For full time internships, the remuneration shall not be lower than 70% of the remuneration established by collective agreement, or 70% of the median income<sup>15</sup> or shall not be lower than the national or sectoral minimum wage or the EU poverty line<sup>16</sup>, whichever is more favorable.

For part-time internships, the obligation to remuneration shall be defined in line with the standard's principle and adapted according to the working hours.

When overtime is allowed according to the national legislation or collective agreements, it shall be additionally remunerated at the same level as regular employees.

#### **B. Supervise internships**

### **4. Skills development**

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<sup>14</sup> In some countries, the word remuneration is replaced by "gratification" (France) or salary.

<sup>15</sup> Median income is the amount that divides the income distribution into two equal groups, half having income above that amount, and half having income below that amount. More info where to look for median income in different countries; [https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc\\_di04&lang=en](https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc_di04&lang=en)

<sup>16</sup> The EU poverty line is the minimum level of income needed to secure the necessities of life and differs greatly for each European country. Determining the poverty line is usually done by finding the total cost of all the essential resources that an average human adult consumes in one year. More info where to look for EU poverty line in different countries <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tessi014/default/table?lang=en>

Once the intern has been identified, it is recommended that the learning outcomes are reviewed with the intern, the host organization and the academic tutor to determine if they need to be tailored to the intern's specific needs and objectives.

The learning outcomes should include the acquisition of specific knowledge, skills, or experience by the interns. Learning outcomes can be an integral part of the legal agreement or another document agreed between the intern and the tutor(s), but should always be put into writing. If needed, the tutor(s) and the intern can jointly agree to amend or revise the learning outcome at any point.

Skills acquisition shall be monitored regularly and evaluated at the end and interns should be supported by a consistent tutor in case the acquisition of skills is identified.

## 5. Tutoring

There are two tutors: the host organization's tutor and the academic tutor.

The host organization tutor is a person linked to/or appointed by the host organization to guide or tutor interns within the organization with professional experience and enough knowledge to make process of tutoring effective"<sup>17</sup>

The Academic tutor is dedicated person nominated by the Higher Education Institution (HEI) to support the intern during their internship when it is related to a study plan. They can be teachers or personnel from a dedicated office.

What are the responsibilities of an academic tutor?

- Establishing learning outcomes of the internship before it starts;
- Supporting interns' professional growth and the achievement of their learning objectives;
- Organising and monitoring the internship from an educational point of view and support interns before, during and after their internship;
- Ensuring that internship related tasks are conducted according to what has been agreed in the internship agreement;
- Establishing a regular communication channel with the intern and the host organization tutor;
- Organising physical meetings and/or site visits at the host organization facilities, when it is relevant and if it appropriate;
- Providing support in case of problems;
- Depending on the HEI internal organization, academic tutor might also contribute to the delivery of the final reference letter, certificate or recognition of credits associated with learning outcomes.

## 6. Career development and employment

Both the higher education institution and the host organization should ensure that :

- Each internship should commence with an onboarding interview that explores the ambitions of the intern including skills and experience acquisition in the context of the internship and outlined expectations. The onboarding interview should be formally scheduled and prepared by all persons involved. At minimum, it is recommended that in addition to the host organization line manager of the intern, the host organization tutor (if different from the line manager), and the academic tutor (when applicable) should be present during the

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<sup>17</sup> Note 1 to entry: This person can be an employee, personnel, staff or another person with a fully integrated role in the organization. Different terminology might be used in different environments such as supervisor, mentor... Any term can be used as long as what is meant by these terms corresponds exactly to the definition of tutor as described in this document.

onboarding interview. This will guarantee that all persons who can support the intern from a career orientation and development point of view are aware of the intern's professional ambitions. By organising the onboarding interview in such a manner, it also will also provide a sound and agreed upon basis to formalise performance reviews, reference letters, etc.

- A written statement or a recommendations letter is given to the intern: this document is provided to the intern at the end of their internship. The intern can use it to demonstrate the tasks performed, the skills acquired, learning outcomes, etc. It should contain at minimum these elements:
  - o A summary of the responsibilities and work performed
  - o Experience obtained through internship responsibilities
  - o Skills developed through internship roles (learning outcomes)
  - o Intent of the host organization to serve as a professional reference

### **7. Work environment and working conditions**

The HEI should check that during their internships, the students have adequate working conditions<sup>18</sup> :

- Inform the intern about the relevant regulations especially related to the working schedule, minimum weekly rest period and vacations;
- Verify that the host organization clearly define the duration of the internships;
- Provide a designated work station and accessibility to the workplace;
- Provide all materials needed at work;
- Provide access to a complaint channel to report abuses;
- Make sure that the internship agreement can be prematurely terminated by any party in case of breach of the agreement (or any relevant regulation), misconduct or malevolence, repeated unjustified absence of the intern or endangerment of the physical and psychological health of the intern.

### **8. Social protection and insurance**

The HEI should ask the intern to check his/her health, accident and others coverages, such as:

- o health insurance
- o medical treatment
- o social security service
- o accidents including accidents at the workplace resulting in disabilities
- o sick leave, if relevant
- o unemployment system, if relevant
- o pension system, if relevant
- o civil liability

#### **C. Follow the intern after the internships**

Some higher education institutions have the possibility or the obligation to follow the students after their internships in case of hiring, gap year for example.

HEI can also keep contact with them to create an Alumni's network for example.

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<sup>18</sup> This point is very important, especially during pandemic.

#### D. Internships abroad

A specific preparation has to be done for an internship abroad. The higher education institution shall include some advices before leaving.

##### i. Integration into the host organization

###### 1. Knowledge

The intern has to take information about the knowledge which is compulsory or recommended to make sure that his/her integration goes well, especially:

- Compulsory official papers
- Languages used in the host organization
- Functional and hierarchical organization chart

###### 2. Know how

The intern has to take all the useful information on the functioning of the host organization, especially:

- Processes and procedures
- House rules especially health and safety

###### 3. Know how to be

The intern has to prepare him/herself about the way of life of the country.

Examples: in Germany, cross at the pedestrian crossing when the man is green

##### ii. Integration in the country

###### 4. Practical aspects

- a. Ways to find financial helps
- b. Travel
- c. Housing

###### 5. Contacts with consular authorities or embassies

#### FOCUS : ERASMUS+ PROGRAM AND PLACEMENTS<sup>19</sup>

Erasmus+ supports traineeships (work placements, internships, etc) abroad for students currently enrolled in higher education institutions in Programme countries at Bachelor and Master level as well as for doctoral candidates. These opportunities are also open to recent graduates.

By doing a traineeship abroad with Erasmus+, a student can improve not only his/her communication, language and inter-cultural skills, but also soft skills highly valued by future employers, as well as become more entrepreneurial. Read more about the [benefits of an exchange abroad](#).

They can also combine your Erasmus+ traineeship with a [study period abroad](#).

#### E. Check list

Period	Criteria <sup>20</sup> / advice	Action	Done	In progress	Not done
Before the internship	<b>recruitment</b>	HEI prepare student's by helping them to look for internships offers			
Before the internship	<b>recruitment</b>	HEI prepare student's by helping them to write a good application			

<sup>19</sup> Link : [https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/opportunities/traineeships-students\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/opportunities/traineeships-students_en)

<sup>20</sup> **The 8 Sprint's criteria are bold**

Before the internship	<b>Written agreement</b>	HEI has to be sure that the written agreement is including the items contained in the guide : 1 signatories			
Before the internship	<b>Written agreement</b>	HEI has to be sure that the written agreement is including the items contained in the guide : 2 identification of tutors			
Before the internship	<b>Written agreement</b>	HEI has to be sure that the written agreement is including the items contained in the guide : 3 duration			
Before the internship	<b>Written agreement</b>	HEI has to be sure that the written agreement is including the items contained in the guide : 4 schedule			
Before the internship	<b>Written agreement</b>	HEI has to be sure that the written agreement is including the items contained in the guide : 5 description of the role and the tasks of the intern and the host organization			
Before the internship	<b>Written agreement</b>	HEI has to be sure that the written agreement is including the items contained in the guide : 6 learning objectives and skills to be developed			
Before the internship	<b>Written agreement</b>	HEI has to be sure that the written agreement is including the items contained in the guide : 7 remuneration			
Before the internship	<b>Written agreement</b>	HEI has to be sure that the written agreement is including the items contained in the guide : 8 information on worker's representation and collective agreements (when relevant)			
Before the internship	<b>Written agreement</b>	HEI has to be sure that the written agreement is including the items contained in the guide : recommended informations			
Before the internship	<b>Written agreement</b>	HEI has to be sure that the written agreement is signed before the beginning of the internship			
Before the internship	Practical kit	complete			
Before the internship	<b>remuneration</b>	HEI can advise the student on the remuneration			
Supervise internship	<b>Skills development</b>	HEI has reviewed learning outcomes			
Supervise internship	<b>Tutoring</b>	The academic tutor is appointed and his/her responsibilities are in			

		accordance with Sprint's guide			
Supervise internship	<b>Career development and employment</b>	An onboarding interview was made			
Supervise internship	<b>Career development and employment</b>	A written statement or a recommendation letter is given to the intern			
Supervise internship	<b>Work environment and working conditions</b>	HEI has checked that the intern has adequate working conditions			
Supervise internship	<b>Social protection and insurance</b>	HEI has ask to the intern to check his/her social protection and insurances			
Follow the intern after the internship (if relevant)		HEI is following the intern after the internship			
Follow the intern after the internship (if relevant)		HEI has created an alumni base			
Internships abroad (if relevant)		HEI has made a specific preparation for internship abroad			

### III ANNEX: Presentation of the Sprint's results

- a. [CWA](#)
- b. [European legislations](#)
- c. [Analyze](#) of best practices on quality internships
- d. Survey on [needs](#) and barriers of stakeholders in implementing quality internships
- e. [Guide for host organizations](#)
- f. [Online self-assessment for host organizations](#)

#### Sources - Guides's examples :

1. CWA on European Criteria for Quality Internships <https://www.cebr.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/The-Benefits-of-Apprenticeships-to-Businesses.pdf>
2. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/labour-market/labour-costs>
3. [www.learntowork.eu](http://www.learntowork.eu)
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