

EUROPE FOR VET+ 2

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COMPENDIUM

RECOMMENDATIONS AND GOOD PRACTICES
RELATED TO HOSTING INTERNATIONAL VOCATIONAL
TRAINEES WITHIN ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME

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Erasmus+

COMPENDIUM

RECOMMENDATIONS AND GOOD PRACTICES RELATED TO HOSTING INTERNATIONAL VOCATIONAL MOBILITIES WITHIN ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME

The document was created as a result of cooperation within the project "Europe for VET + 2"

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I INTRODUCTION

This Compendium is the result of a collaboration of 5 organisations within an international strategic Erasmus+ project titled Europe for VET+ 2 (www.europe4vet2.eu). Partner organisations include supporting, sending and receiving institutions from Poland, Spain as well as Italy. This result is a follow-up to the document created in the previous edition of the project (www.europe4vet.eu), which addressed issues related with sending and supporting organisations. This time the Partnership would like to present good practices and recommendations designed for improving the quality of international vocational traineeships when it comes to the participation of receiving organisations.

The Compendium focuses on supporting receiving organisations and gives suggestions on increasing the quality of VET (Vocational Education in Training) international mobilities for individuals. It presents how the receiving institutions should operate within the framework of international vocational mobility in the Erasmus+ programme. It also offers recommendations for other VET providers (sending and supporting organisations) on: improving the quality of work placements, selection of the mentor for the mobility, preparation before hosting international trainees, how to act during the traineeship period, evaluation of traineeships and much more.

This Compendium is the result of a 22 month collaboration among organisations with years of experience in the VET sector. It includes data gathered via desk research by each Partner, study visits to 16 VET providers in 3 countries and feedback from over 15 organisations.

Erasmus+ international vocational traineeship can be one of the most powerful instruments to enhance students' future employability, boost the international labour market and be a part of the vocational and personal growth for all parties involved in the programme.

Each vocational project, company, sector, and even each trainee can have unique learning outcomes defined during the mobility. What is more, each sending institution can have its own procedures. All those variables make it impossible to clearly define an appropriate way of organising VET mobilities. Therefore, this Compendium should be considered as a gathering of good practices and a source for benchmarking particular solutions when it comes to hosting and improvement of quality of international traineeships. Each organisation should select and adapt only those recommendations which can be useful in their particular circumstances. Nonetheless, the Partnership finds presented content as a great resource on the way to excellence in hosting and sending students within the Erasmus+ programme.

WHAT IS ERASMUS+ AND VET?

“Erasmus+ is the EU’s programme to support education, training, youth and sport in Europe.”
(Erasmus+ Programme Guide)

Erasmus+ offers mobility and cooperation opportunities for everyone and supports the professional development of people working in vocational education and training (VET) through training periods abroad. The programme provides everyone with versatile and equal opportunities for studying and working in another European country.

In this publication, we will only focus on the VET area, but the Erasmus+ Guide gives all the information about other opportunities .

(https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-01/2022-erasmusplus-programme-guide-v2_en_0.pdf)

Taking part in Erasmus+ can provide high school students, who are mostly between 16 to 20 years old, with the opportunity to advance vocational competence, see different cultures and create contact networks.

The participants have the unique chance to acquire a wide set of skills and knowledge on different levels. The time spent working in a foreign company represents a valuable experience that will help the pupils in their future careers and make them understand the labour market.

The traineeship allows them to improve a large variety of soft skills, such as teamwork, stress management and problem-solving, self-empowerment and self-esteem, readiness to work abroad, time management and overall responsibility.

From a cultural point of view, they have the possibility to confront themselves with a different environment, interact with different people, increase their openness and tolerance, get to know other cultures and make connections.

Erasmus+ supports the professional development of people working in vocational education and training (VET) through training periods abroad. Learning mobility for pupils can be organised both in a group and individually.

Group mobility of school pupils can last up to 1 month. This excludes travelling time. Individual learning mobility for pupils can be short-term, lasting up to 1 month, or long-term, lasting from 1 month up to 1 year. This excludes travelling time.

EU grants are paid to the coordinating organisation and are designed to cover the costs for travel and subsistence during the time abroad, as well as offer organisational support to participating organisations. In addition, the Erasmus+ programme provides means to support the inclusion of participants with fewer opportunities.

Details regarding funding rules and additional information can be found in the Erasmus+ Guide (pages 77-92).

I WHAT IS HOSTING? HOW DO VOCATIONAL MOBILITY PROJECTS WORK?

One of the major challenges of today's young graduates is the transition phase from education to the labour market. At the same time, work experience is highly valued by employers, thus early labour market experience such as VET traineeships are useful to facilitate youth access to the job market. It is a two-way relationship where both parties involved – the company and the student – must gain something and help the other achieve the goals.

Usually, a VET project has 3 phases: pre-mobility (where recruitment, training, and confirmation of work placement occurs), mobility (where international vocational mobility takes place), post-mobility (where evaluation, validation, and dissemination happens), all important to guarantee a successful experience for all the participants.

There are three key organisations involved in VET mobility projects:

- the sending organisation
- the receiving organisation
- the supporting organisation

The sending organisation is usually a vocational school. Its main task is to select the students who will join the project and travel abroad. Schools aim to choose the students who deserve this opportunity the most: they need to show motivation, preparation and language skills in order to be able to participate in the project. The sending organisation also takes care of the training of the pupils. Before the departure, they take part in a series of courses that improve their language skills and their cultural knowledge about the country they will be visiting and in the pedagogical training (other training courses may occur as well). The sending organisation is responsible for the quality and the outcomes of the project regardless of the involvement of the receiving/supporting organisations. In these early stages of the project, the sending organisation also chooses the accompanying people – usually, but not always, teachers from the same school – that will travel with the students and assist them during their stay abroad. The accompanying staff is also to be chosen carefully, since the people joining are responsible for the students during their time abroad.

The receiving organisation is the organisation that will receive the students for their traineeship. The companies must be able to offer the students they host a valid learning program. The companies not only benefit from the students' work and their help during daily activities, but they are also responsible for them and have to monitor them properly during the activities as well as teach them as much as they can about the job. The company's mentor is the person responsible for the trainees and working in close contact with them.

The supporting organisation is usually located in cities where the mobility takes place. This offers the opportunity to exchange information on day-to-day activities which the students will be facing abroad like cultural aspects, requirements, etc., but most importantly it provides easy access to various companies in the region. The supporting organisation serves as a connection between the sending and the receiving organisation: it can visit the receiving organisations in person and discuss the exact requirements of the sending organisation. The supporting organisation can facilitate the administrative procedures, namely, they take care of the documents that both the sending and the receiving organisation need to complete in order to participate in the project. It can be responsible for matching the students with the companies. This procedure usually requires conducting interviews with participants, reviewing their CVs and other relevant documents, etc. in order to better understand the particular needs and expectations of each student. Afterwards, the supporting organisation finds the best match from their network of business partners. The supporting organisation can also offer support during mobility. This may include providing the participants with everything they need (such as bus tickets), organising trips as well as cultural visits, and most importantly making sure that the traineeship is successful. They must be ready to intervene in case of any trouble and they represent the reference point for both the students and the companies.

THE ROLE OF THE MENTOR

The mentor is the company's employee who is responsible for teaching the students during the traineeship. They are the students' direct supervisor.

Being a mentor is one of the most – if not the most – important roles in the project, and has a huge impact on the experience of students. They are the person the students will spend most of their time with and, most importantly, the one who will decide how their work will develop during the traineeship. Mentors provide guidance, advice, feedback, and support to the mentee. Often they provide support as a role model, teacher, counsellor, advisor, sponsor, advocate, and ally, depending on the specific goals and needs of the mentee. They improve the trainees' vocational skills as well as their soft skills.

Based on the good practices identified in the project Europe for VET+ 2, the Partnership can recommend the following steps for the mentors and all the co-workers interacting with the trainee in order to provide good quality of the traineeship:

Welcome the students properly: especially on the first day of their arrival, the trainees can be shy and insecure. The mentor should be able to make them feel comfortable, lead from the beginning, get to know the trainees, show them around and introduce them to the rest of the staff.

Set the working conditions: the mentor must provide the students with a schedule. The trainees usually travel via public transport, and their working hours might be affected by the lack of buses or trains, especially if the companies are located far from the city centre. The schedule should be set accordingly, usually 6-8 hours per day, 5 days a week. The students should also be familiarized with all the rules they will have to respect (such as safety rules, working clothes, forbidden behaviours, restricted areas, etc.)

Plan the trainees' activities: the mentor and their team should have a schedule of tasks that have to be assigned to the interns throughout the hosting period. Of course, the mentor can change the assignments depending on the company's needs, or adjust them to the students' skills. Having a plan ready helps the mentor to control the interns better and also will result in a better experience for them. This is the purpose of the Learning Agreement: it defines the programme of the traineeship and provides a transparent and efficient preparation for the exchange, to make sure that the students achieve the set goals.

Communicate with the supporting organisation: every mentor should remember that the supporting organisation they partner with is available to help them at any time. If any problem with the trainee occurs, the mentor can try to solve it with the trainee and if necessary, they can contact the supporting organisation that can support and mediate between the trainee and the company. They will work to solve the problem and fix the situation before reaching the point of no return. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Evaluate the students: at the end of the traineeship, the mentor has to evaluate the students' work and present feedback. It is very important to make sure that the trainee is conducting the learning programme as planned and gaining all the learning outcomes. If the traineeship has been successful, the mentor can write a reference letter that the students will add to their résumé.

The social skills and the approach that every mentor should have towards the students in order to increase the chances of the traineeship being successful for all the participants.

Based on all data gathered the Partnership recommends that each mentor would be:

Tolerant and patient. The traineeship might be the first work experience for the students, for most of them it might also be their first time living abroad, in a country whose language they do not speak. Therefore, the mentor should set the expectation bar accordingly. The interns will make mistakes, and, in these cases, patience is required. The mentor has to be tolerant: the trainees can come from different cultures and backgrounds, which means that some behaviours, jokes, ways of saying, etc., might be acceptable in their culture, but not in the hosting countries' or vice versa. The best way to adapt is to explain to the student the meaning of the behaviour and why it is not accepted in the hosting country. Different cultures lead to different behaviour and thus a good mentor should always be tolerant.

Present and available. For the interns feeling abandoned and useless is the worse, thus, the mentor should spend as much time as possible with them, monitor their work, give them feedback, correct their mistakes, and make sure they always have appropriate tasks to complete. Often just the presence of a familiar person can offer additional support and help a young person to cope with stress, especially at the beginning of the mobility.

Adaptive. The mentor should adjust their teaching methods as well as the assignments to the skills and the personality of the students. After a few days of work, the mentor usually better understands the level of preparation of the students and what every student will be able to bring to the company. Each time a mentor presents new tasks which are outside of the learning agreement, they need to be consulted with the sending organisation and an appropriate appendix signed by all parties involved should be added to the learning agreement.

Able to overcome the language and cultural barriers. The mentor should remember that the students might seem less capable than they actually are just because of their struggle to communicate in their non-native language. For this reason, the mentor should speak slowly, repeat things and make sure that the students understand the assignments. If needed, tools such as translators (the most common is Google Translator <https://translate.google.com>) can be a great help.

Supportive. The mentor should encourage the students, give them motivation, praise their achievements, have a positive attitude towards them, and make them feel worthy and part of the company. The mentor should lead by example. This is the best way to boost the trainees' confidence and get the best out of them.

I BEFORE INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY

"Before international mobility" period is one of the crucial moments of the traineeship. It is very important for the company and mentor to understand that their contribution, involvement, and feedback play a key role in the student's overall abroad experience and have a direct reflection on the long-term future perception of the company environment and contribute to the student's overall grades.

As a mentor, it is important to be aware of the different phases of the entire mobility. Each of the following sections of this Compendium will guide the mentors through the phases. They should take their time to read carefully to contribute to each of them when mobility happens.

Starting from the pre-departure phase of the vocational traineeship, the mentor together with the company should start the process of qualitative preparation before hosting the students, in order to guarantee the best outcomes for all parties involved in the mobility.

CHECKLIST BEFORE HOSTING THE STUDENT :

- ☑ Ensure the trainee has their insurance
- ☑ Inform the company staff of the student's work placement that will take a place on specific dates
- ☑ Ensure the work desk/equipment has been prepared before hosting the trainee
- ☑ Check if the tasks division and traineeship plan are suitable to achieve the learning outcomes
- ☑ Ensure the health and safety space is provided for the student during the whole period of work placement (prevention stage)
- ☑ Confirm learning agreement and validate it is in compliance with the traineeship
- ☑ Make sure you are aware of any special needs* of a particular trainee, in order to adjust every component of the traineeship (e.g. workplace, tasks, etc.)

The quality of hosting placement should be verified by the sending organizations, e.g. by **visiting placement sites and observing participants during communication and performance of tasks.**

*** Special needs ***

One of the biggest challenges for the company and its mentors during the Erasmus+ mobility is providing not only high-quality work placements with dedicated and supportive mentors but also creating an inclusive environment for international students with special needs and backgrounds.

IMPORTANT! Privacy relating to a student's medical condition should always be respected, although this must be balanced with receiving and supporting organisation (if applicable) arrangements, to be aware of serious medical conditions.

Inclusive company to host international students - video

<https://youtu.be/cYAGfrd1BvA>

/Source: Dobre Kadry, Poland. *Go4Diversity Project founded by Erasmus+ program

In order to provide a high-quality traineeship, the mentor together with the company should know in advance the special needs of a particular trainee and adjust the programme of learning activities as well as support offered to the student.

I Applications to develop language skills for free:



Duolingo
(en.duolingo.com)



Memrise
(memrise.com)



Busuu
(busuu.com)



Babbel
(babbel.com)



Hello Talk
(hellotalk.net)



Lingoda
(lingoda.com/en/)

I Communication with the trainee-to-be

Before the student's mobility takes place, in order to prepare for hosting the students and enable them to meet the company's needs - it is highly recommended for the mentor to:

Conduct an interview with the student (arranged by the sending or the supporting organisation, whichever is applicable). Could be arranged via Skype/Soom/MS Teams, preferably as a video call (rather than only audio), to be able to create a very welcome and comfortable environment.

IMPORTANT! Interviews could be an excellent opportunity for the mentor to meet the student in advance, and get to know their language level, personality, work experience as well as motivation. This time also gives the opportunity to ask the student about specific skills and competences in order to fully adjust the tasks to the student's abilities, knowledge and potential.

On the following pages is a short list of questions (with useful recommendations) for the interview:

Could you tell me a bit about yourself? Your interests?

RECOMMENDATION! This question could be a small ice-breaker, an opportunity to get to know the student personality better. Please bear in mind that this type of interview is never comfortable for the students, who are very young professionals and sometimes it is their first contact in such form. To relieve tension and create an atmosphere of mutual understanding and warm welcome, it is highly recommended to start first with very brief information about the mentor itself and a very short sum-up of the company overview. That way students can feel more comfortable and follow the path. Then move to more general questions.

Why have you decided to take part in the Erasmus+ mobility?

What is your biggest motivation to do so?

RECOMMENDATION! Find out what pushed the student to participate in an apprenticeship within the Erasmus+ programme. What motivated them. The mentor can try to ask some additional questions to guide the student regarding types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, bearing in mind that:

- **INTRINSIC MOTIVATION** (self-motivation) involves performing a task because it is personally rewarding to you (e.g. student feels motivated to participate in the mobility, because it sounds like an amazing opportunity to learn, develop their skills, travel, meet people, get to know a new culture, or it is simply a fulfilment of dreams, etc.)
- **EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION** (reward-based or fear-based) involves completing a task or exhibiting a behaviour because of outside causes such as receiving a reward (e.g. student feels motivated to participate in the mobility, because their parents were pushing them to do so, offering a reward in exchange, or because work placement abroad offers extra points towards the final grade at the end of the school year or it is just a fulfilment of the work placement that student needs to complete, etc.) The answers can give a bigger picture regarding student's attitude towards work and performing future tasks.

What are your weak points?

What are your strong points?

RECOMMENDATION! Take this opportunity to ask the student about the strengths and weaknesses. Encourage the student to reflect on that topic. Remember that one of the most important roles of the mentor is to support the student and let them grow. If a student cannot recognize any strong points related to the vocational field, explain that being positive, kind, punctual or responsible is also a great asset. Do not leave the student with negative impressions and remember that the order in which the questions are asked, also matters. End this set of questions with an empowering sense of having important strengths. Encourage their development and emphasise that they are extremely important also in the work placement.

What are your expectations regarding work placement in our company?

RECOMMENDATION! This is one of the most important questions and is definitely connected with the student's motivation. Recognizing the basic expectation towards the company, tasks that will be performed during the mobility will certainly reduce the level of disappointment (for both sides). A well-directed interview can contribute a lot to the work placement preparation for future tasks.

It is highly recommended as well, to give the student short feedback and create a space to share the company/mentor's perspective and expectations towards them. Please bear in mind, not to foreclose the opportunity to hear an honest response (not limited by your own expectations), so save your own point of view for the end of the conversation.

Could you explain to me in more detail the theoretical and practical education which you have gained in your specialisation at school?

RECOMMENDATION! This question will give the mentor a general overview of the subjects related to the field of education and core curriculum implemented in a given sending VET school (it is highly recommended to ask for the type of tools, specific programmes, etc. used during the practical classes to get a general idea regarding the level at which the student is familiar with them. This information might be very useful in terms of familiarising the student with new tools, software (depending on the specialisation), or maybe requirement of basic knowledge that is crucial to start the work placement.

Do you have any work experience? Related to your specialisation (practice) but not only.

RECOMMENDATION! Knowledge of the student's work experience (within the vocational field) would be very important while preparing the work placement and tasks, but mentors should bear in mind that since the students are very young professionals, many of them might not have any work experience related to their field, then questions regarding other work experience (not related to the field) might play also a key role for international mobility. Familiarity with any work environment, company culture, and its rhythm can be an added value.

At the end of the interview, the mentor can provide time for the student to ask questions and clarify all doubts. It might be a good moment to explain basic requirements before starting the traineeship, e.g. workwear/shoes, computer etc. (if needed).

Prepare a short sum up of the company's most important information for the student. You can send it to the project coordinator through the supporting organisation (if applicable) or directly to the sending organisation. That way, if it is not possible to arrange an online interview, students can get in advance the company details and most relevant information in order to be better prepared for their traineeships.

Below is a short list of recommendations of what could be included in this document:

Brief general information about the company, official name & logo (including address, contact to the mentor, closest bus/train station – if possible, photos inside-outside of the building and the office)

Company environment and culture highlights (formal and non-formal). Consider addressing things like country facts, what the student should expect regarding the company environment, dress code, if applicable.

Short information about the mentor (interesting facts or story to share with the student, experience, interests).

Most relevant information for the student*: workwear and shoes (if applicable to bring by the student) + special needs (computer along with specialist software and programs downloaded, if applicable).

*If the company offers: workwear, computer, etc. – it is important to add this information to the brief description

I DURING INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY

During the mobility is the second phase of the project, when the student and the mentor meet in person to pursue vocational and personal goals in practice. Professional and reliable preparation during the pre-departure phase, high quality of the work placement, and full commitment of the company and its mentor, are key elements for the successful Erasmus+ traineeship.

The first day of the work placement is very important in the second phase (the actual mobility), as it sheds light on the following days and weeks of collaboration between the mentor and the student, based on understanding, respecting work standards and mutual involvement. To be able to achieve this, the mentor has to set straightforward rules for the trainee to follow.



Welcoming the student

The first day might be one of the most stressful moments of mobility for the student. A warm welcome, interest and a positive atmosphere are very important factors to build a safe and comfortable connection with the student. First impressions matter and might influence the future approach to the apprenticeship. It is important for the mentor to find out in advance about the culture of the trainee, to bear in mind that some of the gestures and behaviours might come from cultural differences and they are not a representation of the trainee's bad attitude or intentions.

Introducing the mentor, colleagues and company

Finding a bit of time in the busy schedules of the mentors and the company staff, just to introduce everyone/staff from specific departments/key people involved in the mobility, can create a very positive atmosphere and enable the student to feel as part of the company. Knowledge of employees' names and their roles within the company might reduce future stress while seeking support from someone other than the mentor.

A brief overview of the company profile, departments and structures. This can be done during the meeting with the student or while presenting the company, colleagues and showing the facilities. On the first day, familiarise the student with the working area (student's desk), the kitchen (for the breaks), the toilet or the locker where they can change/leave their clothes (if applicable). It might help the student to move freely around the building and the office and reduce the stress generated by misunderstanding.

Gathering information from the trainee

If the interview was not conducted before the mobility, then this would be a perfect moment to have a talk regarding the student's experience, expectations, etc. (examples of questions and recommendations see pages 15-16)

Example of an "icebreaker" game to get to know the trainee better:

To play, everyone sits or stands in a circle (depending on how many people participate in the game). One by one, each person says three statements about themselves. Two of these statements need to be true, and one needs to be a lie. Then the other members try to guess which statement is a lie.

Presenting basic company rule

Setting clear rules and principles of the future collaboration can help to avoid many problems and misunderstandings.

Establish and ensure the student knows:

- working hours;
- entering and exiting the premises of the work placement;
- breaks during work: how long, fixed or flexible (is there a cultural factor, for instance siesta break during working time, explain to the student what it is related to);
- working equipment and workwear/shoes – it is important double-check with the student regarding anything that might be necessary to start the first day of work;
- safety training: ensure the student knows and follows all the basic health and safety measurements (provide English translation of the relevant documents or training);
- daily communication – depends on the language barrier. It is important to set up the communication channels (WhatsApp/Messenger/Viber etc.), and if needed use the applications for translations (Google translator, Itranslate, TripLingo);

RECOMMENDATION

Sometimes the first day at work might be very stressful for the trainee, therefore at the end of the meeting, the mentor should double-check with the student whether all the relevant information has been remembered or whether they require additional support.

Exchanging contacts and managing the documents

The last part of the in-person meeting with the student should end with signing the most important Erasmus+ documents.

The mentor may choose to exchange the phone number with the student and double-check if all the rules and arrangements are clear. It is highly recommended to leave a bit of time at the end of the meeting for the student's doubts and concerns.

I Traineeship - task tracker

The mentor does not always have the time to monitor the trainee's work, check the progress or give them feedback. For that reason, it is important to set up a work schedule and a system that will be convenient for both the trainee and the mentor.

Good work organisation for the trainee will save the effort of constantly looking after them. For many of these young people, this is their first work experience - not all of them are able to stay fully focused throughout their working day. In the first week of the internship, it is worth spending more time with the trainee and starting with simple tasks. Over time, the trainee can become more independent, by entrusting them with more work and more responsible duties.

Below are some examples of how to organize the student's work:

Pomodoro technique

The Pomodoro technique is a tool that teaches how to focus on a given task without distracting yourself from your work. It consists of dividing the working time into work-break-work intervals.

Setting a work schedule using the Pomodoro technique does not require constant monitoring of the trainee. It is clearly assigned when it is time to work and when it is time to take a break.

Step 1. Prepare a list of tasks arranged from the most to the least important.

Step 2. Set the timer for 25 minutes so that the trainee can see how much time they have left.

Step 3. Click Start and let the trainee work. For 25 minutes, nothing else matters but the task.

Step 4. Stop! After the time is up, it is time for a short break - 5 minutes.

During this time, the trainee may rest.

Step 5. Repeat the cycle. After 3-4 cycles, the trainee may take a longer break (20-30 minutes)

Kanban technique

The Kanban method is a visual way of scheduling tasks. It consists of writing out the tasks for the trainee on post-it cards and organising a table with columns "to do", "doing" and "done". Through this, the trainee knows what tasks need to be performed, and the mentor has the ability to check the progress of the work quickly. The Kanban method can also be used as a desktop application.

Step 1. Using regular or virtual post-it cards, write down individual tasks for the trainee.

1 card = 1 task.

Step 2. Divide the cards into three categories: "to do", "doing", "done".

Step 3. Tasks can be grouped and prioritized using additional markings or colours of the cards.

Step 4. The trainee performs tasks from the "to do" column.

After completing the task, they move the card to the "done" column.

Work Schedule

The work schedule can be created based on various factors - e.g. working style, mentor's availability, and difficulty of tasks. When carrying out short-term practices, routine is good and even advisable. It allows the trainee to catch a rhythm and reduces the feeling of uncertainty. That is why it is worth, for example, to specify fixed working hours and breaks in between. Examples of work schedules based on the styles of work:

Working styles	Daily routine			
PLANNER	Plan your day hour by hour	Deep work for 3 hours	Take a stretching break	Work on lighter tasks
PRIORITIZER	Write a to-do list	Start with the hardest task first	Take a break	Work on other tasks
VISUALIZER	Decide on priority for the day	Write down your tasks	Use the Pomodoro Technique	End the day with light tasks

| What to do when there are no tasks for the trainee?

It may happen that during the traineeship there are no current tasks for the trainee. In such situation, it is worth considering the following solutions:

Job shadowing - allow the trainee to observe the work of a more experienced employee. Job shadowing involves spending time following a professional as they work. By observing the professional for anywhere from a few hours to several weeks, trainee can get a better understanding of their particular career.

Give the trainee an individual project on which they can work when there are no current tasks.

Make a list of simple tasks that the trainee can perform unattended at any time.

Let the trainee prepare feedback for the mentor and the receiving organisation
- this can improve the quality of future traineeships

Ask the trainee what tasks they would like to do.

I Feedback - monitoring (how to do it correctly)

During the traineeship, it is important for the students to achieve particular learning outcomes, and in order to do that, the mentor has to check progress against the plans.

The Oxford Advanced American Dictionary defines feedback as "advice, criticism, or information regarding how good or useful something or someone's work is". As reported by Daniel Rottaru, it is a process that can help people evaluate others and their work and also how others perceive them. According to Isidora Markovic, it is an important component of effective learning that improves the learner's confidence, motivation to learn, and ultimately the learner's attainment.

Appreciative feedback and recognition build someone's sense of being valued. It helps to reinforce positive habits and encourages people to perform at their best. Feedback builds self-awareness and helps to become mindful of the impact that actions have.

Feedback is the primary component in the communication process because it gives the student the opportunity to analyse the effect of their work. It helps them to ensure that they are fulfilling the given tasks correctly.

It is essential to give feedback in an effective way so that it has the desired effect (change of a behaviour) whilst maintaining the respect, confidence and dignity of all parties. Effective feedback is goal-oriented, concentrates on the person and their behaviour, is specific as well as realistic, and most of all offers continuing support and outlines further steps to take. For example, the mentor should identify the potential concerns and give suggestions with solutions to the problem, focus on the positive behaviour and good work of the trainee, and finally, follow them step by step during the activities until the task is fully understood.

In order to give effective feedback, it is important for a mentor to describe their requests clearly (for example to change the way of performing a task). Asking the trainee for suggestions and encouraging them to be creative, as well as giving appreciation for the completed tasks, helps to connect with the trainees and make them feel motivated.

Giving and receiving feedback allows for checking progress against the goals: feedback can be useful for understanding the state of the internship, however, monitoring feedback allows results, processes and experiences to be documented and used as a basis to steer decision-making and learning processes.

Monitoring usually focuses on processes, such as when and where activities occur, who delivers them and how many people or entities they reach (Adapted from Gage and Dunn 2009, Frankel and Gage 2007, and PATH Monitoring and Evaluation Initiative). It is conducted once a VET project has begun and continues throughout the programme implementation period, leading to an evaluation.

A daily check is important to monitor the tasks and the progress, but also to make sure the trainee understands all the instructions. One of the most effective ways to monitor the trainee's performance is to directly watch their work and ask other employees for feedback and to collaborate with the supporting/sending organisation.

I Mentoring - you can help the young person grow - ways to do it, the idea behind it

Mentorship is a personal development relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable person helps to guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable person. What matters is not the age of the mentor but their area of expertise.

Mentoring allows people to learn from one another, providing a path to share knowledge and insights, as well as offering guidance to someone with less experience.

In the Erasmus+ VET internship, the mentor has the important role to inspire the interns and help them grow as well as to lead as an example. They provide guidance, motivation, emotional support, and role modelling helping with exploring careers and setting goals. It is the mentor's task to be positive in order to encourage the trainee, boost their self-esteem and listen to them. Mentors take responsibility for making and maintaining contact with the trainees who are from a different country and from a different social environment.

A good mentor organises the work of the trainees keeping in mind that for many of them this is their first work experience and not all of them are able to stay fully focused during the work day.

In conclusion, the mentor helps to raise the trainee's confidence and problem-solving abilities. Along with developing leadership skills, by having a mentor to advise and guide, the student can increase their confidence and develop work skills.

I Problematic areas of hosting and recommendations

Important part of team management which also applies to hosting the trainees is problem-solving. Mentors should possess skills to solve conflicts and be ready to collaborate with supporting and/or sending organisations in case of major problems.

In order to prevent problems, the first condition is to make sure the trainees clearly understand the company rules from the first day. When a problem occurs, the mentor should try to solve it as soon as possible.

This section contains some of the most common problems that can occur during the traineeship together with some possible solutions. It should be considered that each situation is different and can be managed in different ways, depending on the context, the company, the organisation involved, the profile of the trainee(s) and their attitude. The recommendations listed below are not the only possible solutions, they should be considered but not treated as strict procedures when it comes to problem-solving.

STRESS MANAGEMENT. For the majority of the trainees participating in the Erasmus+ VET traineeship, this is the first time they are working in a company, moreover, they are in a foreign country, which can make them feel nervous and stressed.

RECOMMENDATION

To prevent this stress, it is important that the mentor follows these guidelines:

- From the first moment the mentor shows a friendly attitude and a smile, the trainees will gain much more confidence.
- The mentor should have a schedule of the tasks that the trainees are going to carry out. Presenting it to them on their first day will give them an idea of the work to be done, and allow them to prepare for it.
- Communication is very important. The mentor should speak with the trainee to find the reason for their stress, and talk about their fears. This way you can find the most appropriate solution.
- Remember the importance of positive reinforcement, "the more you give as a trainee, the more I will give as a mentor".
- Give a 10-minute break so that the trainee can breathe and relax.
- Accompany the student to a nearby isolated place.

DEALING WITH A SHY TRAINEE. At some point, the mentor may come across a shy trainee who is uncomfortable when communicating, asking questions, or asking for help.

RECOMMENDATION

If this happens, here are some instructions:

From the first moment the mentor shows a friendly attitude and a smile, the trainees will gain much more confidence.

Tell the trainee a funny story that has happened in the company or to other trainees. Introduce them one by one to all the workers within the company.

It is convenient to know some techniques to tell the trainee so that they can put them into practice:

- *Say good morning out loud to the other workers.*
- *Try to talk to whoever sits next to you.*
- *Maintain eye contact with colleagues during a conversation.*
- *Respond to indirect greetings.*
- *Maintain proper posture.*
- *Try to be more social.*
- *Explore their qualities and gain confidence.*

NOT WEARING THE UNIFORM. Trainees can forget to bring their uniform or not follow the dress code/PPE workwear.

RECOMMENDATION

Remind the trainee of company rules.

Show them a safe place in the company where they can leave the uniform when the work is finished.

Remind them that now they are part of the company and they have to maintain their image.

Before their arrival, make sure that they receive the correct information regarding the workwear so that they can come prepared and have the necessary equipment.

USING THE MOBILE PHONE TOO MUCH. Some trainees can use their phones frequently during work hours.

RECOMMENDATION

Remind the trainee of company rules, that this type of behaviour is not permitted.

Offer to keep the mobile in a safe place during work hours and use it during breaks.

Explain that the other team members are not allowed to use the mobile phone during work hours or the use is limited.

BEING LATE/LEAVING WORK EARLIER. It can happen that the trainees are not always respecting the company's working hours.

RECOMMENDATION

Remind the trainee of the company rules

Give them some options to cover the missing hours

Remind the trainee that this is a "real job" and in the future, they could be fired or penalised for not respecting the work hours.

Keep in mind that the mentor and the co-workers are a point of reference for the trainee. If other members of the team are late, then the trainee can think it is ok to be late for work.

DISRESPECTING THE MENTOR. If the trainee is not being respectful towards the mentor or the colleagues, their attitude has to be changed.

RECOMMENDATION

Point out that lack of respect for the mentor or another worker is a serious offence and they can be expelled from the project and/or the traineeship may be stopped.

Let them know that this kind of behaviour can cause a lot of trouble in their life (both professional and private) and that all people deserve to be treated with respect.

CONFLICTS BETWEEN THE PARTIES. Sometimes conflicts can arise among the group of trainees or with other members of the team.

RECOMMENDATION

Gather all of the people involved to have a conversation together. Listen to the trainee, try to understand their opinion and take it seriously. Listen to the other parties involved in order to gain a better understanding of the problem. Keep in mind you have the role of the mediator in this kind of situation.

NOT COMPLETING TASKS. If a trainee is not doing the tasks, it can be due to different reasons:

They do not understand the tasks.

RECOMMENDATION

Using the phone as a translation tool will help to understand each other better. Before commencing the tasks, ask the trainee to explain them using their own words to see whether they understood them.

They do not know how to execute the tasks.

RECOMMENDATION

It can be useful if someone performs the tasks in front of the trainee, so they can see how it is conducted and then supervise their implementation. Make sure to solve all questions and doubts they have.

IMPORTANT! It is very important for the mentor to know the vocational skills of the trainees before they start their traineeship in the company. This way they can create a list of tasks suitable for them. Otherwise, it may happen that the trainee does not know how to carry out some of the tasks as they are too difficult or are not within their field of study. Based on this it is important that the mentor follows the guidelines listed below:

Carefully review the CV of the trainees.

Review the Learning Agreement document to check whether the company and the trainee can achieve the planned learning outcomes.

Do an online interview before the arrival and ask about their vocational skills.

Talk about professional goals for the traineeship on the first day.

Show the list of tasks and check whether they are able to perform them.

They do not want to do it.

RECOMMENDATION

Talk with the trainee to learn the reasons. Motivate them by saying, "I am sure you can do it", and "you will do it very well".

Adjust the tasks to meet the trainee's interests, always keep in mind the tasks must stay within the scope of the Learning Agreement.

IMPORTANT! Mentors have to keep in mind that a trainee's poor attitude is a serious problem that may affect various aspects of mobility. It is important to pay special attention to the mental health of the trainee and willingness to perform tasks. In this regard the mentor should cooperate with other parties in the project: the accompanying person, other trainees working in the company, and sending/supporting organisation.

The role of the mentor is to help the trainees to grow personally and professionally. In order to prevent these kinds of problems, it is the responsibility of the mentor to observe the trainee and set clear ground rules from their first day in the company.

RECOMMENDATION

A good way of solving problems is often through leading by example.

I How to engage and encourage a trainee to work hard

In order to make sure that the trainees work hard, they should feel part of the company. The mentor is the person whose responsibility is to achieve that. The attitude of the company and the trainee is what the relationship is based on. Good results are assured when:

- They are properly introduced to the rest of the team
- They have a good understanding of company rules and the tasks to be performed
- The trainee wants to work hard and is open to learning new things
- They complete the tasks on time.
- They are well integrated with the team and supervised frequently
- They feel part of the team and they understand how they add value to the company
- They feel useful
- They feel encouraged and supported
- They feel that their feedback is considered seriously and is important

As an additional motivation tool, some mentors decide to write a recommendation letter when the traineeship is finished. ([Example page 50](#)).

The mentor can decide to change the tasks during the traineeship in order to make it more challenging and interesting for the trainee. New tasks must stay within the scope of the learning agreement.

Cooperation between the mentor and the trainee is the cornerstone of international vocational mobility. The better the communication between the mentor and the trainee, the more productive the work of the trainee will be.

From day one, the mentor is the trainee's guide in the company. They are the reference person and the one they will go to if they need help or have a problem. It is necessary to have a friendly attitude so that the trainee is not reluctant to communicate.

Every day when the trainee arrives, the mentor should meet with them and explain the tasks they have to carry out throughout the day. They must keep an eye on the trainee's work, amend and help if necessary, and give feedback.

I How to deal with health and working hours issues

Effective workplace health and wellbeing programmes can have a positive impact on worker productivity and performance as well as the health and well-being of employees and trainees.

Therefore, it is important for the mentor to explain very clearly the general safety rules in the workplace during the first day of the traineeship.

RECOMMENDATION

If the company has company rules/safety training only in the hosting country's language, they have to be translated into English before being signed by the trainee.

The main safety-related responsibilities of the mentor are:

- Explain the safety procedures for the correct use of all relevant machines and equipment
- Show the trainees the surroundings and make sure they are up to standards
- Discuss all the health and safety risks which may occur during the work
- Present safety procedures to follow in case of an emergency
- Give the trainees the protective gear where it is required
- Ask the trainee to immediately report to the mentor any unsafe conditions they notice
- Let the trainee take breaks; long periods of time without a break can lead to a decrease in focus or alertness
- Show the trainee how they have to report injuries

As mentioned in the above list, one of the factors that could affect workplace safety are the working hours. Interns should work at least 6 hours a day (this may vary depending on the project), however, it is necessary to keep in mind that this is often their first job experience, so it can be initially burdensome for them. They need to get used to such a work schedule, in which breaks will certainly help them. The mentor should initially indicate the start and end times of work and observe them throughout the period of the internship.

Most often occurring work hours issues are too many or too few breaks - it is worth immediately determining the number and length of breaks in work;

I Cooperation with other parties

When it comes to conflict resolution, it is important that all organisations involved in the project maintain regular communication. The relationship between the supporting/sending organisation and the mentor begins prior to the traineeship. They are in charge of providing in advance the required information regarding the intern (CV, learning agreement, etc.), and they can help to resolve all doubts that the mentor may have. The supporting/sending organisations may organise online interviews with the student.

As the mentor is always available for the trainee, both the supporting organisation and the sending organisation should also be available for the mentor.

During the traineeship, the mentor may be asked several times to provide feedback regarding the development of the trainee. In addition, monitoring visits conducted by accompanying persons (usually teachers from the sending organisation) to the company may take place during the internship.

Responsibilities of the mentor may also include giving an overall grade together with feedback and signing the required project documents.

I POST INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY

This part will focus on the last phase of Erasmus+ traineeships. This section includes recommendations on how to prepare and conduct the evaluation of the trainee and the hosting company. What there is to be gained in this phase for all parties and what could be the follow-up after one mobility project ends.

I Evaluation

The supporting/sending organisations may require some formal documents, like a training log or an evaluation form, to be filled out once the traineeship has been completed. In this section, we will focus on the mentor and their direct interaction with the trainee, on gains that both parties can achieve due to evaluation, and how to make it more “user-friendly”.

Role of the mentor in the evaluation process

Quite often the traineeship will be the first work-related experience for the trainee. This means that the mentor will have to take the lead when it comes to preparing and conducting the evaluation process, summarizing their achievements as well as helping the trainee to better understand all gains and potential areas to improve. It is the role of the mentor to make the trainee understand the full extent of the mobility experience – not just gains related to vocational skills but also social, language, and stress management aspects which are unique in international mobilities.

What?

Evaluation is a process that helps to understand the extent to which particular goals have been achieved and aims at assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of the task/process. Evaluation is described in a number of publications, a few of which are listed below:

B.Ciezka, A. Rybinska, Evaluation in Educational Practice, Warsaw 2020
<https://www.frse.org.pl/czytelnia/evaluation-in-educational-practice;>

Council of Europe and European Commission, T-Kit on Educational Evaluation in Youth Work, April 2007 (ISBN 92-871-6023-2)
https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/toolbox_tool_download-file-499/tkit%20evaluation.pdf

Practical examples of evaluation completed by the trainees:

We asked the students to draw their hand and to write down:



on the forefinger
something they would change at their workplace

on the middle finger
something they did not/do not like at all

on the ring finger
the person or the people they had/have a good relationship with at work

on the thumb
all the things they liked/like in the internship and their general experience abroad

on the palm
three things they have learned since they started their VET experience (it could be something at work, but also chores, foreign words, how to take a bus using google maps, etc.)

This evaluation tool can be used to start the conversation with the trainees, ask them questions regarding their feedback and help them realise all the new things they have learned. At the same time, it offers the mentors a good way to understand what can be changed and improved in order to make the experience more and more pleasant for the young students who participate in the mobility projects.

Why?

What is most important about evaluation, is its purpose. It is not about answering some questions or filling in forms. The point of evaluation is to “grow”. This process of constant verification and implementation of improvements allows all parties to advance on their way to excellence. Evaluation should be understood as a beneficial activity with long-term results which should:

- emphasise gains for all parties – make all parties better understand what they have achieved because of the traineeship
- set a strong base for improvement – know what to change in the future but also what has worked great
- offer insights on evaluation itself - asses if the process used for evaluation needs to be adjusted

How?

This process should be used in a way that suits a particular mentor and trainee. Mentors should adjust tools/questions to the needs and skills of the trainee taking into consideration various aspects like language level, shyness, personal preferences, etc.

In the case of evaluating the traineeship, the mentor should know in advance what are the aims of the traineeship for the participant (learning outcomes, additional skills, and benefits which the trainee should receive during mobility) and what aims were there for the company. They should define evaluation criteria for each goal (e.g. effectiveness, efficiency, utility). This should enable to prepare relevant, precise questions in advance.

RECOMMENDATION

Before you select some of the activities/questions offered in this section observe the trainee in your company, and get to know them better. Only by understanding what makes them feel comfortable, you will be able to conduct the evaluation in the best way.

Exit interview

One of the most basic and useful tools when it comes to evaluation is an exit interview with the trainee. It is a conversation that happens at the end of the traineeship. This can be a great opportunity to exchange feedback between the mentor and the trainee. In cases where the mentor has to grade the trainee, an exit interview can offer the possibility to justify and explain the final grade.

Below you can find examples of questions that can be useful when conducting the exit interview with the trainee:

What were your biggest achievements during the traineeship?

What did not go as you have planned? What could have been improved?

Use general questions at the beginning to get the conversation going and offer the trainee the possibility to reflect on the key aspects of mobility.

What were the goals that you were supposed to achieve during the traineeship?

This kind of question makes sure that both the trainee and the mentor are “on the same page” when it comes to identifying the main aims and checking if the mobility was successful.

How has this experience influenced you as a professional worker? How as a person?

Emphasise both areas. Make the trainee understand that personal development is also a positive and important aspect of the project.

How do you think I evaluate your work? How do you evaluate your work during the mobility?

Quite often the trainees can struggle with self-evaluation. Formulating questions like that offers them the possibility not to just receive feedback from the mentor but also to present their point of view and conduct a discussion.

What do you think about the work schedule/mentor/company/tasks performed when it comes to achieving the goals of your traineeship?

Additionally, try to focus on the areas in which the company can improve. What you, the mentor, could have done differently? It is important to include questions that connect the area of evaluation with the criteria of evaluation. Not asking for general feedback, but going a step further and analysing experiences as a road leading to particular goals. This should enable to focus the conversation not just on positive/negative aspects but on how it fits into a bigger picture – completion of aims of the traineeship.

Let me give you my feedback related to the particular aims of your traineeship. For the first aim... (present the aim) I believe you have achieved(present arguments). In the future, you might consider focusing on ... (present arguments and examples on how the trainee could improve).

The interview should be a “two-way street”, not only the intern should offer their feedback but you should present your opinion about their progress.

RECOMMENDATION

Before preparing your final list of questions please review again the section “Short interview with the student” (pages 14-16). It can be very enlightening to see how the answers of the trainee might have changed, what they consider as their strong/weak points, whether their expectations have been fulfilled during the traineeship, etc.

Tips for conducting the exit interview:

- Remember that for the trainee this is another learning opportunity.
- Plan all questions in advance and write them down.
- Before you conduct the exit interview, give the trainee a couple of days’ notice. This will allow them to prepare for the conversation.
- Use a private room to make them feel secure.
- Reserve enough time – try not to rush it.
- Start with general questions (e.g. what do you think about our company? What do you think about your experience from the mobility?)
- Each time there are differences in the way an item/area is evaluated by the trainee and the mentor, take the required time and try to analyse it, explain and make sure both parties understand why it is so.
- If you host a number of trainees, organise the exit interviews separately –allowing each trainee to feel important and safe.
- Offer positive feedback – emphasize what the trainee did correctly.
- Keep your remarks clear and simple, try to communicate them in a friendly, non-confrontational way.
- Limit questions to only the most relevant.
- Emphasize that you value the opinion of the trainee.
- Inform the trainee that their feedback will not in any way affect the final grade they receive.
- When offering your feedback be precise, give examples, try not to generalize.

I Evaluation form

It can be useful – especially for a shy trainee – to conduct part or the whole evaluation in a form of a questionnaire (questions which the trainee can answer in the place of accommodation). This may help with stress management and can offer the required time for the trainee to fully present their feedback. The form should be prepared by both parties – the trainee and the mentor. At the end of the mobility, they can exchange their evaluation forms and through this present their feedback.

Tips for preparing evaluation form:

- Keep the language as simple as possible.
- If you host multiple trainees, consider making the form anonymous to increase honesty.
- Try to include self-evaluation questions (e.g. what do you think you have achieved during the traineeship?)
- Try to use open-ended questions.
- If needed consult the group supervisor/supporting/sending organisation to translate questions/answers of the trainee.
- Explain the questionnaire before giving it to the trainee (e.g. this form will help the mentor and the company improve in the future).
- Try to provide sufficient time for the trainee to fill-in the questionnaire.
- Try to use interactive methods and tools (online surveys, kahoot, etc.) to make the evaluation form more appealing to the trainee.

Evaluation is not just for the trainee

Conducting international traineeships is an activity that can produce a lot of gains for the receiving organisation, for example:

- Improvement of social skills of companies' employees – this may help when the company decides to hire new (foreign) employees, as well as general improvement of management skills of mentors responsible for trainees.
- Possibility to validate various potential employees from other countries without the need of hiring them.
- Improvement of the company's image – perceived as more socially active.
- Fulfilment of the company's goals related to social responsibility by offering the possibility to educate young Europeans from other countries.
- Increase the network of international organisations with which the company cooperates. This may offer a great start to developing further projects both in Erasmus+ and other EU programmes.
- International traineeships give the company an opportunity for the exchange of know-how. Trainees offer insights into the vocational education process in other countries and sometimes can even suggest improvements in procedures which are practised in the company.
- Satisfaction from helping young people gain international, often first, work experience.

All of the aforementioned (and more) gains can be achieved by participating in vocational education mobilities within Erasmus+. It is up to the company to take the advantage of this unique opportunity which is offered by the European Union. Therefore, when conducting an evaluation process it is always worth considering what the company has received and what it could have done differently to maximise the gains. Those aspects can be included in the form of direct questions to the trainee or sending institution.

I Evaluation of receiving organisations (rating system)

The idea of the evaluation process

Each year thousands of organisations across the EU conduct vocational mobility projects during which young people achieve various learning outcomes during international traineeships in companies. However, there seems to be a lack of measurement tools for the evaluation of companies.

Quality assessment of a workplace is a very complex issue. Nonetheless, all partners within Europe for VET+ 2 project, concluded that this problem is crucial in terms of quality development and the promotion of good project results within the VET sector. Thus, during multiple visits to various receiving and sending organisations in 4 countries, the Partnership has taken the first step to developing a solution which could be used by any VET provider who wishes to participate in international mobilities.

As a result, tools have been created to allow for a comprehensive evaluation process containing questions that aim to test the quality of traineeship implementation (based not only on trainees' feedback). At the same time, additional tools allow for measuring elements that require development for more effective hosting by organisations. What is more, this process can provide feedback and give special recognition to companies that fulfil their task.

The evaluation process can be conducted in various ways. From the experiences gained in Europe for a better VET+ 2, the Partnership prepared an evaluation process which aims at emphasizing the importance of creating a common, universal tool for evaluating hosting organisations. It offers designated tools that can be adjusted and used freely by all interested parties in hope of improving the quality of learning outcomes in the VET sector.

What to consider before starting the evaluation of the hosting company?

During the research and development of the evaluation process, the Partnership has encountered various limitations which need to be addressed and considered when it comes to the formulation of a particular evaluation summary. The most relevant are:

- Each vocational profession requires specific infrastructure to meet the needs of a particular learning programme designed by sending organisations. Creating an ex-ante list of necessary equipment, skills, and other factors for each sector is impossible. What is more, each sending organisation is allowed to create their own learning programme with dedicated learning outcomes, which complicates this issue even more. Thus, in the ex-ante form, we have stipulated that each time a competent teacher/expert from the sending institution must evaluate answers provided by a potential company separately. This person needs to make the decision regarding required resources and potential of a company, which are essential to achieve particular learning outcomes defined in the learning agreements used by the sending organization.
- The prepared evaluation process focuses on qualitative and quantitative data - which is indicated by open-ended and closed questions. It is worth noticing that quantitative data should be analysed only if one has a number of various data points (from various mobilities). Please review the literature on how to analyse qualitative and quantitative data.
- There are no uniform evaluation metrics for assessing the quality of international traineeships in the EU. Thus, it is impossible to compare achieved results from using our process between different databases. Therefore, it is suggested that organisations using this evaluation process compare results from various companies to one another and to create a benchmarking system. Each year the process is being conducted, it provides additional data comparison points – thus the usefulness increases in time.
- In order for the evaluation process to be useful, it has to be fast and efficient. This strongly limits the number of questions which can be included in the research tools. Therefore, every organization using the provided tools needs to consider each suggested question carefully. Taking as well into account their specific requirements/resources, some of the questions should be adjusted to provide more useful results.

- Evaluation process requires gathering data from various parties (the trainee, the supporting organisation, the sending organisation, etc.). Some of this data (in particular from the trainee) can be very subjective and has the potential to be influenced by emotions. It is recommended that when interpreting the results and formulating recommendations, involved experts in the VET sector consider and if needed, adjust the importance of particular factors.
- Our evaluation process has been developed as one of the results of KA2, a small-scale partnership project. Due to limited resources, the Partnership was not able to test and update it during the project. Nonetheless, the Partnership views it as the first step towards the creation of a universal ranking tool for all hosting companies.

How to conduct evaluation process using designed tools and how to create ranking system?

Before proceeding with the evaluation process, it is important to know if a company is suited at all to take part in an international vocational mobility project. To help with this decision the Partnership within Europe for VET+ 2 has developed an ex-ante form with the most relevant questions. In addition to that, this form offers a starting point measurement - for both the company and the sending/supporting organisation. If the company decides to extend its cooperation and open a new sector for hosting, this form can be used to gather relevant data as well. This form includes questions related to basic information about the company, resources possible to allocate in case of the traineeship, company's requirements, possible sectors in which the hosting could take place, information related to competences and experience of mentors, etc.

Each evaluation should be conducted by a team of researchers with background in qualitative and quantitative data analysis. Before proceeding, it is imperative to create a detailed description of the entire research procedure, key responsible people, deadlines, etc. Only then the researchers may create / adjust research tools, define most relevant evaluation criteria, etc.

To conduct a comprehensive evaluation process of a receiving organisation (responsible for hosting of international trainees) it is important to include feedback from all key parties: sending organisation, supporting organisation, trainee, and self-evaluation from the receiving organisation. In order to achieve that, the Partnership has prepared the following tools:

Ex-ante form (for companies) – appendix 1 . [page 52](#)

Ex-post form (for trainees) – appendix 2. [page 53](#)

Ex-post form (for sending organization) – appendix 3. [page 54](#)

Ex-post form (for supporting organization) – appendix 4. [page 55](#)

Ex-post form (for companies) – appendix 5. [page 56](#)

The process should start by filling in the first questionnaire by a potential company (appendix 1). Then the sending/supporting organisation should analyse the provided data and decide if the company is sufficiently suited to conduct the international traineeship.

RECOMMENDATION

Whenever it is possible, please contact the mentors who will be responsible for interacting with the trainees directly. Their motivation, as well as an understanding of the idea of the traineeship in the organisation, is as a relevant factor as the resources which the company can provide. Frequently the quality of learning outcomes is related to the support the trainee receives directly from the mentor.

The next steps of evaluating the receiving organisations can be conducted in the following way:

1. Create/adjust separate ex-post feedback forms for key parties involved in the project (example forms have been provided in the appendix). Select the most relevant questions (keeping in mind special requirements for each profession which takes part in the project), adjust all questions to meet the needs of the sending institution (in particular learning outcomes described in learning agreements).
2. Gather data from all parties during the last week of mobility (or if possible after the mobility has ended).
3. Perform data analysis and group results into key areas (each sending organisation can create own areas which are most relevant – ex. learning outcomes, overall satisfaction, etc.). For each group of criteria (area) define relevance – consider which area is most important for your organisation, and which input (participant/supporting/receiving organisation / etc.) is most important.
4. Evaluate data considering qualitative and quantitative approach.
5. Compare results from last year/other projects/etc. - if possible. Track progress of particular companies.
6. Prepare suggestions for each receiving organization - what could be improved? what should be repeated? what goals have been achieved? etc.
7. Select best receiving institutions and present prizes.
8. Take action – consider results and try to improve entire process of conducting vocational mobilities in your organisation, receiving institutions.

RECOMMENDATION

Offering prizes to the best companies can be a very good tool for increasing quality of future internships and improving relations. Often prizes may just come in form of planks, diplomas or letters of recommendation issued by sending institutions.

It is worth considering to create various categories not only the best hosting organisation but as well others like: the one which made the intern feel the most welcomed, the one which offered the most diversified tasks, the one which had the best mentor, etc.

This procedure enables various sending organisations to perform individual evaluation process of receiving institutions. Europe for VET+ 2 has showed that each project can have various learning outcomes, various aims, various professions. Therefore it is not possible to construct just one, universal metrics which evaluates each company on the same – point-based scale. Often the most important factors are the ones which are the most difficult to measure – like attitude of the mentor. While considering results obtained during the evaluation each organisation should keep in mind which factors and areas where the most relevant when it comes to achieving particular project goals. Therefore each sending organisation can create its own receiving organisations rating system – based on the most relevant criteria for particular project.

Each organisation should construct own data base – where results of each evaluation process are being recorded and considered during next mobility projects. Comparison of data past and present can lead to new, interesting recommendations. This can also show progress which a given receiving organisation has achieved.

This evaluation process is just a recommendation – each organisation is encouraged to adjust it and its instruments to meet one's needs the best.

RECOMMENDATION

Evaluation should be a process which leads to practical results and recommendations. Each organisation should consider necessary changes which are implied by the results obtained in the evaluation process. Therefore the last step of any evaluation process should be the beginning of implementation of improvements.

I RESOURCES

I Erasmus+ Guide

(<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/erasmusplus-programme-guide>)

I “Europe for VET+ 2 – training for mentors”

“Europe for VET 2 – training for mentors” is a training dedicated for the hosting company’s mentors to enable them to develop their skill-set and practical knowledge regarding: the Erasmus+ programme, conflict resolution, problem-solving, communication with the trainee, emergency situations, giving effective feedback, etc. The training contains as much practical advice and guidance as possible, with real-life examples. ([click here](#))

I Recommendation letter

General suggestions on what to include:

Date: day/month/year.

Add subject: Recommendation letter

Sender: It is important to place the sender's data at the top of the letter. Including name, title, company, address (street, number, city, state), phone number and email address.

Salutation: To make the letter more personal, it is important to address the sender directly using Dear Mr. / Mrs. / Miss and the person's last name. In case you do not know the name of the person, include only Dear Mr./Miss.

Introduction: Indicate the reason for your letter, how long you have known the trainee you recommend, and your relationship with them.

Overview: Use the following paragraph to discuss the trainee's strengths and abilities, as you have had a chance to experience them, and how they can benefit the recipient. You can use one to three paragraphs of no more than four lines, to facilitate reading.

A personal story: in this paragraph, you can include some real examples during the work that demonstrates the skills or moral quality of the trainee.

A final statement: In closing, you can make a statement of why you are happy to recommend this person.

Closing: to finish, simply write a farewell phrase showing your availability for any further information.

I Recommendation letter - example

DD/MM/YYYY

*Ms/Mr/sender name/title/
company/address
(street, number, city, state),
phone number and email address.*

Recommendation letter

Dear Mr/Miss YYY,

I first met Ms xxx while she was working as a trainee receptionist under my charge. While working the front desk as part of the Erasmus+ placement programme, Ms. XXX demonstrated excellent communication and interpersonal skills.

After working with her for 4 weeks at our hotel, I have to admit that I was very impressed by her eagerness to learn new things, hard work and, above all, by her superb skills when assisting demanding clients.

Ms xxx possesses all the necessary qualities to succeed in this industry. She has a pleasant personality, takes a sincere interest in the people she is serving and has outstanding organizational skills. She is always willing to take on new challenges and responsibilities. On one occasion, when our hotel was quite busy, she distinguished herself when we found ourselves short-staffed in the housekeeping department. She volunteered to take on a job other than her own, and in doing so demonstrated a flexible approach to work and true team spirit.

I highly recommend Ms. xxx for your programme and hope that you will carefully consider her application. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I may provide additional information or be of further assistance.

*Sincerely,
XYZ*

I Appendix 1. Ex - ante form (for companies)

- **Context**

- Please provide a brief description of your company (open-ended 1000 characters max)
- How many people do you employ? (number)
- What are your usual working hours? (open-ended)
- Potential sectors/professions which you can host interns in:
 - Sector 1 ... (fill in the name)
 - Sector 2 ... (optional) (fill in the name)
 -

- **General internship section:**

- Will you provide safety instructions for interns during the first day of training? (yes/no)
- Have you ever hosted interns before? (yes - national, yes - international, no)
- What is your motivation to host? (open-ended)
- What do you expect to gain from hosting? (open-ended)

- **For sector 1 provide information regarding:**

- What types of tasks can you provide to the interns in this sector? (open-ended)
- How many students can you host in this sector? (min. number, max. number)
- Would you be open to hosting students with disabilities? [yes, maybe, no]
- How the internship will be conducted
 - What is your idea about the internship - how would you organise it? (for example how often would the mentor meet with the student) (open-ended)
- Availability of the mentor
 - How many hours per week can a mentor spend with the students? (number)
 - How many mentors can you provide for the students in this sector? (number)
 - Is constant supervision required in this sector (for the interns)? (yes/no, if yes then describe)
- Competences of the mentor(s):
 - What other languages can the mentor(s) speak (communicatively - A2 level): (a checklist with the languages)
- Is the intern required to bring any extra work equipment in order to conduct the traineeship in this sector? If so, please specify. (open-ended)
- Is the intern required to have any special professional/vocational skills in order to conduct the traineeship in this sector? If so, please specify. (if applicable)
- Is the intern required to have any special language skills in order to conduct the traineeship in this sector? If so, please specify. (if applicable)
- Do you provide interns with any special equipment? If so, please specify. (if applicable)
- Is there any other relevant information that you would like to provide us with?

- **For sector 1 provide information regarding:**

- ...

I Appendix 2. Ex - post form (for the trainee)

PART 1. COMPANY

- What is your general evaluation of the company? (1 - very bad, 5 - very good)
- How do you think you fitted into the organisation? (1- very bad, 5 - very good)
- Were the tasks related to your field of study?
(1 - not related at all to your sector, 5 - very related to your sector)
- How much did you like the tasks? (1 - not at all, 5 - very much)
- How difficult were the tasks for you (1 - very difficult, 5 - very easy)
- Have the tasks met your expectations? (1 - not at all, 5 - very)
- Have you learned anything new? (1 - not at all, 5 - I conducted only new tasks)
- How do you evaluate the general atmosphere in the company (kindness of employees, willingness to help, general attitude towards you)? (1 - very bad, 5 - very good)
- How do you evaluate the work schedule? (1 - very bad, 5 - very good)
- How do you evaluate the workspace (the facilities, the work area, the equipment)?
(1 - very bad, 5 - very good)
- Did you feel as part of the company (Was your feedback appreciated? Have they explained why your job is important?)? (1 - very bad, 5 - very good)
- If you have any comments regarding this section, please provide them here. (optional, open-ended)

PART 2. MENTORS

- What is your general evaluation of the mentor (if you had more than one, please provide the average mark and explain in the comment section)? (1- very bad, 5 - very good)
- How was your general introduction to the company (different departments, presentation of workers, showing around the office, the safety training)? (1 - very bad, 5 - very good)
- How well did the mentor explain your tasks? (1 - very bad, 5 - very good)
- How do you evaluate the relationship between you and the mentor? (1 - very bad, 5 - very good)
- Did you receive full support from your mentor (answering questions, helping, giving feedback)?
(1 - not at all, 5 – yes, absolutely)
- If you have any comments regarding this section, please provide them here. (optional, open-ended)

PART 3. GENERAL INTERNSHIP FEEDBACK

- What was the best part of your internship (open-ended)?
- What was the worst part of your internship (open-ended)?
- Was the monitoring of your work sufficient? (1 - not at all, 5 - yes, absolutely)
- Would you recommend this company to a friend? (1 - not at all, 5 - yes, very much)
- What in your opinion could the company improve to make it a better experience?
(optional, open-ended)
- If you have any comments regarding this section, please provide them here. (optional, open-ended)

I Appendix 3. Ex post form (for the sending organisation – a teacher)

- How many times have you visited this company? (number)
- Please describe 3 main positive items about the internship experience for the students in this company. (open-ended)
- Please describe 3 main negative items about the internship experience for the students in this company. (open-ended)
- What is your general evaluation of the company? (1 - very bad, 5 - very good)
- Please justify your previous opinion (open-ended)
- Would you recommend this company as a hosting company for the next project?
(1 - not at all, 5 - yes, fully)
- Please justify your previous opinion (optional, open-ended)
- Please evaluate the quality of the internship programme conducted in the company.
(1 - very bad, 5 - very good)
- If you have any other comments regarding the internship in this company, please provide them here
(optional, open-ended)

I Appendix 4. Ex post form (for the supporting organisation)

- What was the general fit of the intern in the organisation? (1- very bad, 5 - very good)?
- Please justify your previous opinion (open-ended)
- What is the general evaluation of the company? (1- very bad, 5 - very good)
- Please justify your previous opinion (open-ended)
- Please describe 3 main positive items about the internship experience in this company. (open-ended)
- Please describe 3 main negative items about the internship experience in this company. (open-ended)
- Would you recommend this company as a hosting company for the next project? (1 - not at all, 5 - yes, absolutely)
- Please justify your previous opinion (optional, open-ended)
- Please evaluate the quality of the internship programme conducted in the company. (1 - very bad, 5 - very good)
- How easy was it for the company to meet the deadlines (regarding documents and procedures)? (1- very hard, 5 - very easy)
- How easy was it to communicate with the company? (1- very hard, 5 - very easy)
- Do you have any other relevant information about this company? (optional, open-ended)

I Appendix 5. Ex post form (for the hosting company, self-evaluation)

- General experience from sector XX (name of the sector like logistics, IT)
- What was the general fit of the intern in your organisation (if you had more than one intern, please provide the average mark and explain in the comment section)? (1- very bad, 5 - very good)
- You can provide justification for the mark (optional, open-ended)
- What is your general evaluation of the internship (if you had more than one intern, please provide the average mark and explain in the comment section)? (1- very bad, 5 - very good)
- What is the feedback from the mentor regarding the participant(s)? (open-ended)
- Was the English level of the mentors sufficient for fluent communication during the internship? (1 - not at all, 5 - yes, absolutely)
- Have you (the mentor/company) learned anything new? (1 - not at all, 5 - yes, a lot)
- Were the tasks related to the field of study of the intern? (1 - not related at all to the profession of the student, 5 - highly related)
- Was the difficulty of the tasks adjusted to the level of the students? (1- no, tasks were too easy/too difficult, 5 - yes, the adjustment was very good)
- Please describe 3 main positive items about the internship experience for your company. (open-ended)
- Please describe 3 main negative items about the internship experience for your company. (open-ended)
- Would you be interested in hosting a student again? (1 - not at all, 5 – yes, absolutely)
- What would you change when hosting the student again? (open-ended)
- If you have any relevant comments, please write them here. (optional, open-ended)

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COMPENDIUM

RECOMMENDATIONS AND GOOD PRACTICES
RELATED TO HOSTING INTERNATIONAL VOCATIONAL
TRAINEES WITHIN ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME

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