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# International Work Placement



# GUIDE

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## PART 1: TIPS FOR STUDENTS

### Introduction

An international work placement (IWP) is an adventure: a unique learning and life experience on both the professional and the personal level.

However, it is very important for you to be aware of your additional social role, too. You are a representative and an ambassador of your school, country and culture during the whole period of your staying abroad. It is your task to show a positive attitude and make people in the host country, eg your co-workers, get to know your country through you. Display a positive attitude so as to make others want to know more about where you come from.

During your work placement you have the opportunity to develop your potentials beyond the goals set in your learning agreement which refers particularly to your personal (intercultural) development and language learning. You can “pick up” the basics of a new language, the language of your host country, and learn a lot about their culture and customs by socializing with you co-workers and local people. You may be given the opportunity to present your ideas or past experience from home at your work place – use it and take an active role within your work team, although you might be shy and usually stay in the background. It is worth trying because you can give a lot of interesting information to your host employers. They will not consider you as a “temporary cheap work force” but are interested in an added-value you may bring to the company.

Past mobility participants reported many benefits of an international work placement. It is said that such an experience:

- raises self-confidence and independence
- improves communication and intercultural skills
- motivates ability to adapt
- inspires team work
- provides participants with valuable contacts in the professional field
- opens new horizons/opportunities for a future professional career

This part of the guide gives you an overview of the main tasks and activities to be done before, during, and after your international work placement. The tips are supported with many useful links to help you find more information and make your international work placement an unforgettable life experience. An additional support is offered by the International Work Placement Portfolio (IWP Portfolio) which can be downloaded and adapted for individual work placement, and printed.

## BEFORE THE WORK PLACEMENT

### Motivation

#### Reasons for going abroad

There are many reasons for doing an international work placement. The table below gives an overview of the main reasons, the related objectives to be achieved during the mobility and the subsequent impact of these on mobility participants.

Reasons:	Objectives:	Impact:
Your communication skills are limited in a foreign language/ foreign languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to improve your foreign language skills and/or to learn a new foreign language (the language of the host country)</li> <li>to improve your workplace-related vocabulary</li> <li>to communicate with work colleagues</li> <li>to socialize with locals during your free time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>improved language proficiency better communication skills at the workplace (better contacts with foreign customers)</li> </ul>
You want to gain international professional experience (upgrade existing professional skills, gain new skills, etc)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to improve/upgrade existing professional skills and knowledge</li> <li>to gain new skills and knowledge based on personal experience during the mobility (learning by doing), eg new materials, using new methods of work, new machines/utensils, applying new criteria for quality control, evaluation etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>improved and/or new professional skills acquired in an international environment (supported by Europass Mobility, certificates, letters of recommendation etc) This would enhance your CV and represent an extra bonus in your application for a job</li> </ul>
You want to travel abroad (see other countries, meet new people, experience different ways of life)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to acquire intercultural skills such as:</li> <li>becoming acquainted with the tradition, way of life and habits in the host country</li> <li>understanding and respecting other cultures</li> <li>becoming more culturally aware and tolerant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>acquired intercultural competencies which result in your ability to integrate into, and cooperate within, an international work team</li> <li>new personal contacts with people in your professional sector which may be useful in the future as business contacts, etc</li> </ul>
You want to improve your career chances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to get a professional, personal and intercultural experience abroad</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a better position on the labour market at home and abroad</li> <li>increased self-confidence</li> </ul>

Generally speaking, the main objectives of your mobility experience should be:

- to find out your strengths and weaknesses
- to recognize opportunities for your future professional career
- to improve your position on the labour market at home and abroad

When you decide to apply for an international work placement you should first try to define clearly your expectations regarding the professional and personal objectives to be achieved during the mobility. This will help you during the application procedure, (which could include personal interviews, interviews by phone, letters of motivation, first contact with the mentor of the host company etc), where you could be asked to explain/ justify your motivation. However, you should be aware of the fact that it is very difficult to find work placements which meet all the expectations of a mobility participant. Therefore, a priority list of your professional and personal objectives will make your decision easier.

If the work placement is organized by your home institution within the Erasmus + programme, you are more or less limited to its partner host institutions and the work placements included in their offer. These may not fulfil all your expectations, but the content of the training will definitely be in accordance with the requirements of your home institution with regard to the acknowledgement of the mobility learning outcomes within your study programme.

## **Application**

### **Getting information**

Before applying for a work placement abroad it is very important to be well informed about the possibilities of getting a grant and about the application procedure:

- contact person(s)
- conditions and selection criteria
- deadlines
- application forms
- other required documents, etc.

The best thing is to contact the International office or the IWP coordinator at your home institution for more information about the Erasmus+ programme which offers funds for co-financing international work placements. You can get informed about Erasmus+ by visiting the web page of your National Agency. The list with the contact data of the National Agencies in all EU countries (member states and candidates) is available on the following link:

[http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/tools/national-agencies/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/tools/national-agencies/index_en.htm)

If you are applying for Erasmus+ grant at your home institution, the application procedure is prepared and implemented by the IWP coordinator. In this case, you can usually get all the information mentioned above within the Call for Applications itself, as well as on document templates on the web page of your school/institution. Sometimes, introductory meetings are organized for students interested in mobility, which include:

- the presentation of the Erasmus+ programme
- partner countries and institutions
- an open discussion to answer the most important questions of potential mobility participants.

You can also arrange a meeting with your IWP coordinator for more specific information relating to your own personal interests.

If you are still in doubt whether to apply or not, you could either ask your IWP coordinator for the contact details of some past mobility participants, or read their reviews on the school webpage, if available.

If you didn't manage to get a grant but you are still determined to search for an international work placement, there are some excellent web pages where you can find opportunities for mobility and further useful links:

<http://www.euroapprenticeship.eu/en/information-about-mobility.html>:

This page provides mobility-related information for all EU countries and the relevant contacts (organisations, programmes and initiatives, sources of information) – free registration is necessary.

[www.leonardoexperience.eu](http://www.leonardoexperience.eu):

A European webpage developed for all parties involved in mobility – information about mobility organisations (both sending and receiving partners), employers and participants. Here you can also find reviews of past participants, post your CV and search for work placements or jobs, explore resources for linguistic preparation, and much more.

<http://www.animafestexperience.com/signin.php>:

Animafest is the biggest intermediary organisation for mobility in Spain. Their web page in 17 languages offers internships in more than 250 hotels in Spain. It is a good option for students without a grant because free accommodation and meals are provided in all partner hotels. You simply sign in, choose one of the 17 languages available and fill in the online application form. The services of Animafest are free of charge.

## Preparing documents for the application

The following documents are most frequently required and used in application procedures:

- The Letter of Application or Cover Letter
- The Europass CV (with European Skills Passport attached - optional)
- The Letter of Motivation

If you were selected for a grant within Erasmus +, you will probably be asked to fill in the application form of your home institution and attach your Europass CV and Letter of Motivation.

## The Letter of Application or Cover letter

However, if you are looking for an international work placement by yourself, you will be expected to write a Letter of Application (or Cover Letter) to the potential employer. The main purpose of the Cover Letter is to convince the recipient to read your CV (and attachments). It should be clear, concise and straight to the point.

The most important points to follow:

- address the letter to the contact person stated in the advertisement for internship or on the webpage of the organisation offering internships
- mention the position advertised and the resource of advert in your **introduction**
- tailor **the body text** to the descriptions and requirements stated in the advert by summarizing interesting data about your career and directing the reader to your CV

You can find more tips, examples and useful information on how to write cover letters on: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/549/1/>

## The Europass CV

The Europass Curriculum Vitae (CV) is the most widely known and most frequently used document (form) in Europe to present one's education, skills and qualifications effectively and clearly. Following the link below, you can find instructions for creating your own Europass CV. There are templates and examples of CVs in all EU languages. You can either download a template or create your CV online, which can be updated anytime you acquire a new degree or new skills.

<https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/documents/curriculum-vitae>

It is advisable to study the instructions and have a look at an example CV before you start creating your own Europass CV online.

## The European Skills Passport

The European Skills Passport (ESP) is an electronic portfolio which helps you document your skills and qualifications to give a more comprehensive picture of your professional competencies. By creating your ESP online, you can gather documents such as:



- the Europass Mobility Pass
  - Language Passport
  - Certificate supplement
  - copies of degrees or certificates
  - letters of recommendation etc
- and attach them to your Europass CV.

Furthermore, the ESP can be regularly updated.

<https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/documents/european-skills-passport>

### **The Letter of Motivation**

The Letter of Motivation is usually required by the receiving and/or host organisation within the Erasmus+ mobility actions. It is generally submitted together with the Europass CV, which gives the basic “facts” about your education, work experience and skills. Moreover, the Letter of Motivation provides the receiving co-ordinator, and host employer, with the key information about your expectations, reasons/motivation for the mobility experience, desired work place and any professional and language skills relevant for this work place. It also helps the receiving co-ordinator (when this is not the same as the host co-ordinator) to select a suitable work placement among different host companies by matching your profile with the work placement offer. So, keep in mind the quality rather than quantity when writing it. Follow the link below to find some tips and sample texts for letters of motivation:

<http://motivationalletter.com/motivational-letter-template-for-an-internship/>

[https://www.euba.sk/fakulty/fakulta-aplikovanych-jazykov/preview-file/Letter\\_of\\_Motivation-9199.pdf](https://www.euba.sk/fakulty/fakulta-aplikovanych-jazykov/preview-file/Letter_of_Motivation-9199.pdf)

### **Contacting host organization**

If you are trying to find a work placement by yourself, you can contact potential employers by sending a letter of inquiry, a letter of application, or an email message. Since good host companies receive hundreds of emails/letters it may be a good option to make a phone call and have the first conversation with the person in charge of international work placements. This may even have a better effect than your CV with attachments. If you are well prepared for it, your phone call may be taken as a sign of self-initiative, motivation, enthusiasm and self-confidence on your part.

On the other hand, you may also be requested for a phone interview even if you are an Erasmus+ mobility participant. Some companies prefer to get a first impression about their future trainees in a personal conversation. If you receive such a call unexpectedly, ask the interviewer for an opportunity to ring back, rather than respond immediately. Thus, you will get some time to prepare properly.

You can find many useful tips, strategies and sample questions for phone interviews on the following web page:

<http://internships.about.com/od/interviewing/a/phoneinterviews.htm>

## **Preparation**

### **Selecting the host country and the host organisation**

As an Erasmus+ mobility participant you will be able to select among the partner countries respectively partner organisations of your home institution.

Most colleges, and particularly vocational colleges, have descriptions of criteria their students have to meet while doing practical work outside the college which usually apply for doing an international work placement, too. Since your IWP is a part of your study programme it is important to select the host organisation which can offer work placement according to the requirements of your home institution (duration of the work placement, contents/tasks of the training programme and/or ECTS credits). This is vital for the evaluation and recognition of your international work experience within your study programme.

To learn more about the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) please visit:

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/ects\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/ects_en.htm)

Your IWP coordinator will advise you how to match your personal expectations and objectives and the criteria of your school/university with the work placements offered by the partner organisations.

If you are planning your IWP on your own, get the information about the above-mentioned requirements from the person responsible for work placements at your home institution, and include the minimum “package” of these criteria in your Letter of Application. In this way, the employer(s) abroad you are addressing will know what kind of work placement you are looking for.

Whether you are an Erasmus+ mobility participant or not, make sure that your Learning Agreement, with detailed description of the tasks, duration of the work placement and ECTS credits awarded (if applicable), has been signed by all three parties (sending organisation, host organisation and you), before you make fixed arrangements for your staying abroad.

### **Accommodation arrangements**

Sending organisations in secondary vocational education and training usually offer full support to the selected Erasmus+ mobility participants including accommodation arrangements. In tertiary education, the level of the co-ordinator’s support in organisation and preparation for mobility differs from institution to institution.

If you are expected to find the accommodation by yourself you can:

- ask your host organisation to help you find a place to stay or to send you some useful links with accommodation adverts; bigger companies may own apartments, which they rent to their interns – check this option, too
- ask your international work placement coordinator for the contact data of the past mobility participants who completed their work placements in the same city
- contact a local school, university in the destination city or student associations (eg AIESEC, AEGEE, ESN) to ask for help in finding suitable accommodation
- browse internet resources (web pages and/or student portals) such as:  
<https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/>  
<http://www.scholarshipportal.eu/providers/10200/casa-swap-international-housing-network.htm> (International accommodation network for Youth and Students)
- stay in a hostel for the first few days if you cannot find proper accommodation before your arrival Explore the housing market in person and ask local people who can direct you to places with notice boards offering accommodation, or even recommend a landlord to you.

Try to find a place to live within the area where your host organisation is located. If this is not the case, check that you have at least good access to public transport. When booking from your home country or online, always ask for written confirmation, and take it with you to the host country. Check if there are any deposits to pay upon the arrival (eg a deposit against damages) This is quite common when you rent a private room or flat.

## **Travel arrangements**

When you start planning your trip to the host country, you should:

1. Get as much information as possible on travel options to your host country:

- ask your IWP coordinator for support if the travel is organised by the sending organisation
- ask past mobility participants for advice about where to look for the best travel options and for useful contacts or links for buying cheap tickets
- check and compare the offers at travel agencies
- search for travel offers on the internet. Some links below may be helpful:

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com>

<http://cityguide.travel-guides.com>

Cheap airlines:

<http://www.whichbudget.com>

[www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com)

[www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com)

Bus connections:

<http://www.eurolines.com>

Travel blogs:

<http://www.wearerealtravel.com/blog>

Travel vaccination overview:

[http://www.netdoctor.co.uk/travel/vaccines\\_index.shtml](http://www.netdoctor.co.uk/travel/vaccines_index.shtml)

2. Book your plane ticket in advance, and enquire about how much luggage is permitted, and if it is included in the ticket (some cheap airlines charge additional fees for each piece of luggage, depending on its weight). If booking online, save and print your e-ticket.
3. If you intend to travel by bus or train, check whether there are any discounts for students and which document you need to present to get such a discount, eg the International Student Identity Card (ISIC) or a Student Association Card from your country.
4. Get a map of your destination area in the host country, and check your options on how to get from the airport/ bus station or railway station to the place you are going to stay at during your mobility period.

## **Documents**

### **Valid passport/ID**

Check the validity of your personal documents as soon as you have fixed the dates for your IWP. Some countries require 6 months' validity of your passport. Check the validity requirements for your documents in the destination country early enough to get them issued in time before the departure. It is advisable to make a copy of your passport/ID and keep it separate. In case of theft or losing your personal document, the copy of it will make the procedure at the police station and at your embassy easier and faster.

Find your embassy in the host country on:

<http://www.embassyworld.com/>

### **Credit card**

It is not advisable to carry a lot of money in cash with you. Besides, the debit cards may not work everywhere. A credit card is easier to keep safe. It gives you the possibility to take smaller amounts of money from the bank bit-by-bit and it may be helpful in emergency situations.

### **International Student Identity Card (ISIC)**

You can save money by presenting this card when you buy entrance tickets at museums, galleries or when you visit cultural events.

Follow the link to get more information: <http://www.isic.org/>

### **Visa and Work permit**

EU citizens don't need visas or work permits for an IWP anywhere in Europe.

For detailed information and exceptions follow the link:

[http://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/residence/documents-formalities/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/residence/documents-formalities/index_en.htm)

For visas worldwide :

<http://www.anyworkanywhere.com/visainfo.html>

### **European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)**

When using this card, you are entitled to any medical treatment that can't wait until you get home. You have the same rights to health care as people insured in the country you are in.

For more information how to get and use it follow this link:

[http://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/health/unplanned-healthcare/temporary-stays/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/health/unplanned-healthcare/temporary-stays/index_en.htm)

### **Insurance Card/Policy**

When travelling and staying abroad, you should arrange insurance for situations not covered by the European Health Insurance Card, such as third party liability insurance, which regulates damages you are responsible for (eg you may break a valuable object or hurt a person by accident during your work placement).

Follow the link for some basic information:

<http://www.work-and-travel-insurance.com/travel-insurance/insurance-options/>

Contact your national insurance provider for options and details related to your host country.

### **International Work Placement Portfolio (IWP Portfolio)**

The IWP Portfolio was designed to help you collect and keep all important data documents and materials related to your work placement in one single folder. Fill in the relevant sections before your departure (e.g. Personal data, Sending organisation data, Host company data etc) and add documents like the Europass CV, Letter of Motivation etc to the Dossier. Continue filling in your IWP Portfolio during your work placement by completing the missing data about the host company (e.g. the names and contact data of your mentor and co-workers, work schedule ) and start collecting additional materials for the Dossier like brochures, instructions, presentations, photos etc. Before leaving the host country make sure that you have collected all documents (stamped and signed) from your host company which are required by your home institution for the recognition of your mobility period and add them into the Dossier. The IWP Portfolio will be a great support for writing final reports and/or presentations about your work placement. It can also be presented as attachment to your CV when applying for a job requiring international experience.

### **Contracts**

You should make sure the Learning Agreement (Training Agreement) is signed by all parties involved.

## **Financing**

It is of great importance to estimate the cost related to your international work placement realistically to avoid problems during your stay abroad.

If you have been selected by your home institution for the Erasmus+ grant the financial issues are usually arranged by your sending co-ordinator. He/she will also give you information on the cost items covered by the grant and the approximate amount needed for other expenses, which is your own contribution.

If you haven't got a grant you should consider other options for co-financing. You may:

- look for a host company which provides free accommodation and meals, gives a salary /pocket money or both,
- search for national grants supporting mobility
- contact students who have already worked in your host country and ask them how much money they earned and spent (see the links in the chapter Application of this guide)
- ask you parents /relatives for financial support or
- take a part-time job to earn some money.

Make your financial plan by filling in the corresponding boxes in the charts below.

**Financial plan**

<b>Cost overview</b>	<b>BEFORE</b>			<b>AFTER</b>
	Estimated cost	Co-financing	Own contribution	Real cost
<b>Travelling</b>				
<b>to the host country (return tickets)</b>				
- flight				
- bus or train				
- trip cancellation insurance				
<b>in the host country</b>				
- local travel to work				
<b>Accommodation</b>				
- host family				
- room/ apartment / shared flat				
<b>Linguistic and cultural preparation</b>				
- language course in the host country				
- sightseeing (entrance fees etc)				
- visiting social and cultural events				
<b>Insurance</b>				
- health insurance				
- third party insurance				
- accident insurance (urgent medical help)				
<b>Other</b>				
- meals, food and drinks				
- socializing, free time activities etc.				
<b>TOTAL</b>				

<b>Income overview</b>	<b>Amount needed</b>	<b>Amount available</b>
<b>Funding/grants</b>		
- Erasmus+ grant		
- National grant		
<b>Personal savings</b>		
<b>Parental contribution</b>		
<b>Income at host company</b> (salary/pocket money, travel allowance)		
<b>TOTAL</b>		

## Linguistic preparation

If you don't speak the language of the host country selected, you will probably use English for communication in everyday life and at workplace. Therefore, you should pay focus particularly on the professional vocabulary (workplace-related language) which is of utmost importance for you to understand the tasks and requirements at your work place. Here are some suggestions how to prepare for efficient communication:

- ask your English teacher for help: he/she may give you additional materials and links to useful online resources or check your language skills
- some sending institutions, particularly those in secondary vocational education and training (VET) organize the linguistic preparation at home or in the host country for the whole group of participants –ask your IWP coordinator about this option
- search for free online materials/courses on the internet - follow the links below to find some examples:

[http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/tools/online-linguistic-support\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/tools/online-linguistic-support_en.htm)

Free online language support with tutorials, online exercises, news etc. for 6 languages: English, German, Spanish, French, Italian and Dutch (provided within the Erasmus+ programme).

[www.vocalproject.eu](http://www.vocalproject.eu)

A free online language course in English combined with 12 languages (Bulgarian, English, Finnish, French, Galician, German, Hungarian, Italian, Lithuanian, Portuguese, Slovak, Spanish and Swedish), including 5 main topics: Accommodation, Travelling, Emergencies, Socialising, Working. All texts and exercises are audio-supported and include cultural information in the form of DOs and DON'Ts, too.

[www.eurocatering.org](http://www.eurocatering.org)

A free online course for catering and hotel sector in 11 languages with audio-visually supported exercises, professional dictionary, video clips with non-verbal communication, cultural information and Portfolio with self-evaluation checklists.

<http://www.rsgo.eu/>

E-learning packages for language and cultural preparation for a work placement abroad in Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish, Italian covering the following sectors: hotel, bakery, restaurant and vehicles.

The material combines professional and general vocabulary with cultural coaching and information on the work culture.

<http://www.vocal-medical.eu/>

Language learning materials for communication in the healthcare sector



[www.languagesforwork.eu](http://www.languagesforwork.eu)

Free online languages course for the traffic sector in English, Finnish, Croatian and Slovenian with audio-visually supported exercises covering most frequent problem situations on the road in 4 sections: Accidents, Breakdowns, Orientation in a city and Stopped by the police.

<http://www.becult.org>

A web-based tool for the cultural, linguistic and professional support for work placements abroad in the hotel and catering sector.

It is also very important to take any opportunity to learn the basics of the language of your host country like greetings, numbers, time expressions, useful phrases to thank, apologize, explain that you don't understand something etc. Your co-workers and local people you may get into contact with will appreciate your efforts and help you improve your language skills. Your motivation to learn the language of your hosts will reflect your respect to them and prove that you are aware of the importance of acquiring not only the professional, but also intercultural and multilingual skills.

## **Cultural preparation**

### **Getting information about the host country**

It is very important to be informed about the host country from an intercultural point of view, to be able to understand, as well as to adapt to, a different way of living and working. Your international work experience will be successful only if you are well-prepared and you know how to act and/or behave when confronted with cultural differences. It is good to be informed about the current political, religious and social situation in the host country. Your preparation should include the following topics:

- greeting people (formal and informal greetings, non-verbal communication like shaking hands, kissing etc)
- addressing people (formal, informal; polite phrases – introducing oneself, apologizing, thanking etc)
- socializing and 'safety' (popular places, places/areas to avoid, taboo topics etc)
- eating habits (time, traditional dishes and beverages)
- national holidays
- national health service (medical assistance, accidents and emergency, European Health Insurance Card. See [http://europa.eu/eu-life/healthcare/index\\_en.htm#50](http://europa.eu/eu-life/healthcare/index_en.htm#50))
- official language(s) and currency
- essential documents (visa, work permit etc)

To get this information you can:

- buy a travel guide for your host country
- talk to people who have already been there (past participants from your school/institution)
- browse through internet resources

Since the above methods could be time-consuming, an easier and faster way to access some key information is through the following links:

[http://europa.eu/about-eu/countries/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/about-eu/countries/index_en.htm)

This is the portal of the European Union with key information of all EU member states and candidate countries. Schengen Area members (passport-free travel) and links to further information resources (eg student's resident rights for different periods of staying abroad etc.)

<http://www.infoplease.com/countries.html>

On this website, the country profiles are structured in alphabetical order. Each country profile provides information on: geography, maps, flag, history, current ruler, area, population, capital, largest cities, languages, ethnicity/race, religion, economy and government.

Another useful site is the CIA World Factbook website:

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

This, like Infoplease, provides detailed information about countries.

[www.vocalproject.eu](http://www.vocalproject.eu)

This free online material is based on preparation for student mobility placements abroad offering practical language skills and cultural awareness related to vocational training settings. Useful information on living and working in 10 EU countries are structured under 5 main topics (Travel, Accommodation, Socializing, Emergency and At Work) and accompanied by an audio-supported language course (see more in the chapter Linguistic Preparation).

### **Getting information about the host enterprise**

When preparing for your international work placement, you should not assume that in the host company things will be done as you are used to doing them at home. A new working environment, and often an international working team, represents a challenge even if you are acquainted with the national culture of the host country. The problems which may arise are linked with the host company's internal policy, regulations, procedures and values, otherwise known as company culture.

It is also advisable to have an overview of the company's structure, staff, products and services. Most of this information can be accessed on the company's official website. The purpose of preparation is to avoid surprises, disappointments and/or misunderstandings at the very beginning. However, the most intensive intercultural training starts with your very first day in the company (read more in First Contacts in the following chapter).

## DURING THE WORK PLACEMENT

It is advisable to arrive in your destination city some days before your IWP starts, to settle down, to get acquainted with the new environment and to prepare for the first day at your host company. Don't forget to arrange the important administrative things like registering at the police station for the length of your stay, opening a bank account and getting a tax card if your host organisation will pay you for your IWP. In case you did not get the relevant information on these issues before, you may ask your mentor at the host company for help.

### First contacts

In most companies, an introductory meeting for international students is usually organized on the first day to introduce the company, mentor(s) and the organisation of the work placement. Sometimes a summary of the workplace-related information is provided in a written form. If you have still open questions, the first personal conversation with your mentor is the best opportunity to get answers about key matters. The following checklists may be helpful:

[http://internship2industry.eu/tools/M2\\_2.1\\_D1\\_Checklist\\_for\\_the\\_Trainee-Introduction\\_to\\_the\\_Company.pdf](http://internship2industry.eu/tools/M2_2.1_D1_Checklist_for_the_Trainee-Introduction_to_the_Company.pdf)

[http://www.euroapprenticeship.eu/img\\_base/toolbox/n37-checklist-for-the-trainee-introduction-to-the-company-en1.pdf](http://www.euroapprenticeship.eu/img_base/toolbox/n37-checklist-for-the-trainee-introduction-to-the-company-en1.pdf) (free registration necessary to access the web page)

You should be aware that the first impression is the most important one—most employers/mentors make up their mind about your personality, quality and potential during the first face-to-face meeting. Do not underestimate the impact of a well-groomed appearance and be prepared:

- to give a brief but interesting introduction of yourself and your expectations
- to make notes on important matters explained to you by the mentor thus showing motivation in adapting to the company's internal regulations

The same applies when you meet your co-workers for the first time. They may have unwritten rules related to organisation of a working day (eg the first person to arrive makes coffee, shared food and drinks etc). If you are unsure about anything, do not assume, but ask.

### Dealing with problems

Reports from past mobility participants show that almost every trainee/intern is confronted with problem situations during the work placement. A lot of things may go wrong, eg you may be given tasks at your work place which are not included in your Learning Agreement, the co-workers may not be as kind and helpful as you expected, etc. Anyway, such situations, though unpleasant or stressful, give you an opportunity

to develop your skills in problem-solving. It is important to keep calm, to speak openly but politely to the right person (your company mentor in this case), to find a compromise between the expectations and reality and to learn from this experience.

Follow the link to find a summary of useful tips how to deal with most frequent problems: <http://internship2industry.eu/tools/what%20if.pdf>

One of the most frequently reported problems outside the work environment is losing a passport or ID. There are two necessary steps to solve this problem:

- go to the police station to report the loss of your ID. Take the copy of your personal document with you (see Preparation/Documents) or copy the personal data from the IWP Portfolio to make the procedure faster. If you don't speak the language of the host country ask your co-worker to come with you and help with translating
- call your embassy in the host country and ask for instructions on how to proceed (you can find the contact data in your IWP Portfolio (if filled in before the departure) or on the web page: <http://www.embassyworld.com/>)

## **Socializing**

Although you have decided for an IWP to gain work experience abroad, you will have enough free time to get to know the host country and its people. Socializing with co-workers outside the company and meeting local people will give you an opportunity to acquire a large amount of knowledge in a very pleasant way. Your new friends will tell you about interesting cultural and social events, best places to see, most interesting sights to visit and much more. Though you may have informed yourself about the host country before and even made some plans for free time activities, you should not forget that spending time with the locals and observing their behaviour in different everyday situations will give you the best insight into the culture and tradition of the host country. Local people often know and show you places which are not included in tourist guidebooks and flyers. You don't have to agree with everything or accept certain habits or points of view, but you should always show respect towards the culture of your hosts.

## **Improving language skills and/or learning a new language**

An IWP is an excellent opportunity for "Learning (the language) by doing", which particularly true at the work place because of the strong visual support. For example, if you do not understand what you are told to do, your colleague can show you the object and name it again or demonstrate an action by showing you the verb describing it. Besides, you can bridge the language gaps by using your knowledge of the professional field and guessing the meaning of a word or phrase in a well-known professional situation. The best thing is that you learn all the time: while working, shopping, sightseeing, visiting events or socializing with local people. Here are some tips what to do:

- ask people questions whenever you need information
  - talk to your fellow employees as much as possible
  - go out and socialise with (local) people- use every opportunity to listen, speak or read in the language of your host country- no matter what level you're at - people will appreciate your motivation and efforts to learn their language
  - identify gaps in your language skills (situations where you have problems with communication) and try to find resources to fill them in
  - make notes of most frequently used words and phrases – create your personal dictionary
  - keep your eyes open when walking through the city and use the advantage of the visual support around you: inscriptions on buildings and signs or items in shop windows let you guess the meaning of the word(s) without using a dictionary
- Most students reported that language learning during the work placement has never been so easy, amusing and efficient as it is in this way.

### **Collecting the documents**

Some days before departure, check with your host mentor when and where you can pick up the documents related to your work placement. Sometimes the host companies send them directly to the sending organisation - in this case ask for copies and put them into the Dossier of your IWP Portfolio. Remember that your international work experience will be recognized at your home institution only on the basis of the documents, so check in time if all documents required by your home institution are filled in, signed and stamped by the host company.

If you think that your work was appreciated and your superiors were satisfied with your achievements, you may ask for a letter of recommendation.

## **AFTER THE WORK PLACEMENT**

After returning home, take time and try to summarize your impressions and experience gained during your work placement. Do not let the story end at this point, but share your experience with your school, peers, friends, employers and local environment. Your main tasks to do now are:

1. Write a Thank-you-letter to your host company, mentor and/or people who supported you during the work placement
2. Check the requirements of your home institution and prepare all documents needed for the recognition of your work experience abroad within your study programme
3. Write the final report about your work placement. You may use a template provided by your school for this report or follow the tips on how to write it on:  
<http://internship2industry.eu/tools/HowToWriteFinalReport.pdf>
4. Complete your IWP Portfolio – add the Thank-You-letter, the final report , additional photos and material to the Dossier folder.
5. Share your experience – this may help future mobility participants decide for a work placement abroad more easily and/or prepare for it better. If you answer the questions you had yourself before and during the work placement, your experience

report will be much appreciated by other students, who will follow 'your tips' and the co-ordinator's as well.

However, giving practical advice from your own experience is just one aspect of sharing your impressions and new knowledge. You should also try to inform any potential employers about the professional, language and intercultural competencies acquired abroad. You can, for example, put posts on the school web page, Facebook or Twitter, make presentations for your classmates, students and staff at your school and the broader public at relevant events like seminars about mobility etc.

6. Stay in contact with your host company - send an e-mail to your mentor or co-workers occasionally if you want to do another work placement or get a job at this company in the future.

**CHECKLIST- STUDENTS** (see Appendix 1) offers additional support in the form of a quick overview of the most important tasks to be done before, during and after the work placement.

## PART 2: TIPS FOR COORDINATORS

### Introduction

This part of the guide is designed to offer help to international work placement coordinators with little or no experience in planning, organizing and implementing successful work placements abroad. The suggested procedures are relevant to all placement coordinators, working either in sending or intermediary (receiving) organisations.

The word **coordinator** as used in this guide refers to the person in charge of mobility exchanges in the field of vocational education and training for the purpose of training (ie work-based learning experience in the real world).

The main task of a coordinator is to organize work placements which give the participants the opportunity to gain professional practical experience abroad, to improve their communication skills in a foreign language(s) and to develop intercultural competences. In other words, the coordinator's activities are very important for the quality and success of the workplace learning experience of the mobility participants because he/she should offer support to participants in all phases of the work placement covering professional issues, communication matters and conflict management.

This applies not only to coordinators at sending institutions but also to receiving institutions acting as intermediary organisations, ie providing appropriate work placements in enterprises/companies in the host country. However, there are specific tasks, typical for each of the two coordinator roles: the sending and the receiving coordinator.

### SENDING COORDINATORS

#### BEFORE THE WORK PLACEMENT

##### Finding suitable receiving partners for work placements

A good and reliable partner is crucial for a successful work placement. There are many different ways to find a partner. One of the best ways to find a partner who is able to respond to the needs of mobility participants is to contact an experienced intermediary/receiving organisation with references and a wide network of host partners (enterprises or companies). You can search for such organisations using the following links:

<http://www.euroapprenticeship.eu/en/home.html>: Partner search database, Tools database, events, mobility related information for 27 EU countries, relevant contacts, organisations, programmes and initiatives, sources of information).

<http://www.europemobility.eu/>: Catalogue of International Community of Mobility Coordinators, database of accredited work placements, learning mobility events etc.

Information and contact details are available for registered and approved Europemobility members.

[www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com): the world's largest professional network, LinkedIn with interest groups covering partner search for EU projects like:

<https://www.linkedin.com/groups?home=&gid=4105229> (Group: Erasmus+ Partner search)

[https://www.linkedin.com/groups?mostRecent=&gid=4287623&trk=my\\_groups-tile-flip-grp](https://www.linkedin.com/groups?mostRecent=&gid=4287623&trk=my_groups-tile-flip-grp)

Group: Erasmus+ partner finding

<http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/>

Dissemination platform of Erasmus + projects is a unique database of European mobility projects which can be searched for by using different filters/criteria. By clicking on a project of your interest (country or topic) you will be able to access the contact data of the partners involved.

You can also respond to e-mail invitations of intermediary and/or host organisations offering work placements abroad, but it is advisable to check the organisation and its references to avoid unpleasant surprises later. When a potential receiving partner or host company is researched, the reviews of past participants can be very useful to help the coordinator make the final decision.

Another good option is to establish the partnership based on personal acquaintance from various international events on the EU level, like other projects, thematic or dissemination conferences, contact seminars, training courses, workshops etc. The common interests and expectations of both parties can be checked and discussed face to face, thus avoiding unexpected obstacles, misunderstandings and/or unpleasant surprises at a later stage.

This option can be used instead of a preparatory visit since this is no longer included in the Key Action 1 (KA1), which covers all types of mobility within the new Erasmus+ programme.

The IWP coordinator should also offer support to students who may not have received a grant but are highly interested in doing their internship abroad. In this case the coordinator should direct the students to webpage addresses of organizations offering work placements with free accommodation and meals, or paid internships, or a combination of both like:

[www.animafestexperience.com](http://www.animafestexperience.com) and <http://www.europe-internship.com>

### **Preparing data for the application form**

If the coordinator is not the person who is responsible for writing the application form (see: [http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/discover/guide/documents-applicants\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/discover/guide/documents-applicants_en.htm)) he/she should provide the key information related to the planned work placements. It is very important to define: professional profiles, detailed contents



and duration of the work placements in conjunction with the curriculum of the school/college, to make the recognition/validation of the learning outcomes easier and more transparent.

### **Implementing the selection process**

If your institution was awarded a grant for co-financing work placements abroad, it is the coordinator's task to organize the selection of participants, particularly if the number of applicants exceeds the maximum covered by the grants awarded. It is important that the potential candidates are well-informed about the selection process prior to the opening of the school/college application period.

The coordinator's activities include: defining the criteria for the selection, informing the target group of participants about the conditions and procedure for getting the grant for IWP, their obligations if they are selected, and the recognition of the learning outcomes by their home institution on the basis of successfully completed and certified work placement. A sample of a downloadable assessment grid for selection of mobility participants can be found on:

<http://www.euroapprenticeship.eu/en/selection-and-matching.html>

(free registration required).

### **Preparing documents for the work placement**

The required documents are prepared according to Erasmus+ project guidelines for the Learning Mobility of Individuals (KA1), and most of them are available as templates on the website of the National Agency in your country. A list of all the National Agencies per country can be found on: [http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/tools/national-agencies/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/tools/national-agencies/index_en.htm)

If the work placement is not co-financed by the European Commission, the templates and other documents are usually provided by the receiving organisation. It is extremely important to have all documents related to the work placement, particularly partner contracts and detailed training agreements, signed before the departure of the participants. For teenage participants it is usually compulsory (or advisable if not compulsory) to have the individual contracts/agreements co-signed by their parents, too. It is also the coordinator's task to contact their National Europass Centre to obtain the EUROPASS Mobility documents for all participants, to fill in the corresponding parts, and then send them to the receiving coordinator.

See more tips for filling in the Europass mobility:

[http://internship2industry.eu/tools/M2\\_3.1\\_D1\\_How\\_to\\_fill\\_in\\_the\\_Europass\\_Mobility.pdf](http://internship2industry.eu/tools/M2_3.1_D1_How_to_fill_in_the_Europass_Mobility.pdf)

[http://www.euroapprenticeship.eu/img\\_base/toolbox/n32-europass-information-en.pdf](http://www.euroapprenticeship.eu/img_base/toolbox/n32-europass-information-en.pdf)

Europass National Centres contact data (listed by the country) can be found on:

<https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/about/national-europass-centres>

Detailed information about Europass documents are available in all EU languages on:

<http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/home>

All information about social security (insurance, medical treatments, etc) in EU countries can be found on: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=26&langId=en>.

However, it should be pointed out that mobility participants are expected to have a valid insurance in their own country including the three types of insurance as follows:

- accident insurance (to cover accidents)
- health insurance (to cover illnesses) and
- third-party liability insurance (to cover third-party risks).

Further detailed information on all types of insurance can be obtained from national insurance providers

### **Arranging travel, accommodation and insurance**

This applies particularly to initial vocational education where work placements are mainly implemented within the Erasmus + KA1 mobility project and the coordinator makes arrangements for the whole group of participants. The extent of this support, however, may differ from institution to institution. At tertiary level, participants are expected to show more initiative and make these arrangements by themselves. The coordinator is supposed to give them some basic information and guidelines on these issues, but also to support them more intensively in defining the content of the training agreement, in accordance with the institution's requirements related to compulsory internship within the curriculum.

### **Organizing linguistic and cultural preparation**

The scope and form of linguistic and cultural preparation depend on the target language(s) used during the placement (the native language of the host country and languages used in the host company), as well as on the educational level of the participants (secondary/tertiary level).

The coordinator should involve language teachers of his/her home institution in the planning process because they can provide relevant information on resources for learning workplace-related language, skills and time needed for adequate preparation, particularly if they are well informed about the host companies and the main tasks the participants will be expected to perform.

Cultural aspects should be integrated into the preparation activities as well.

The Erasmus+ programme offers free online language support (with tutorials, online exercises, news etc.) in 6 languages: English, German, Spanish, French, Italian and Dutch. More information on:

[http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/tools/online-linguistic-support\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/tools/online-linguistic-support_en.htm)

More tips and useful links for linguistic and cultural preparation are included in Chapter 1-Tips for Students.

As already mentioned, the extent of the coordinator's assistance depends on the educational level of mobility participants. Students in initial vocational education usually need the full support of the coordinator including all the tasks listed in this chapter. Participants in tertiary education, however, are expected to demonstrate their high motivation and adequate skills in searching for appropriate work placements, arranging travel and accommodation and using suggested resources for linguistic and cultural preparation as self-study.

## **DURING THE WORK PLACEMENT**

The main tasks include:

### **Monitoring work placements**

Monitoring should run in co-operation with the receiving coordinator/host company mentor and the participants to get feedback from both aspects. It is advisable to have the main criteria for evaluating participants' progress agreed upon with the receiving partner, as well as the measures for solving the most frequently anticipated problems. The most important thing is that the work placements are implemented in accordance with the partner contract and individual training agreements. This will ensure that the participants face more or less expected situations, thus making them feel more confident in performing their tasks.

### **Keeping contact with mobility participants**

It is important that the coordinator supplies the participants with his/her contact details during the work placement (e-mail address, Skype name, mobile phone number, timetable of contact hours etc). This is especially important as many work placements take part during the holiday periods when schools/colleges are closed. Therefore, the co-ordinator should maintain regular contact with participants and the receiving co-ordinator in order to monitor the progress of the work placement, to assist in problem-solving and to be available in case of emergency, including hours which are outside the agreed contact hours.

### **Assisting in problem solving**

Although they might be prepared for living and working in a foreign country, participants may encounter problems which arise from cultural differences and/or social conventions.

In such situations, the coordinator can help the participants by speaking to them and pointing out that adapting to:

- different working environments
- different working relationships and
- different ways of working (which seem to be a problem for the participant)

is a part of the work-based learning process.

Socialising with new friends and colleagues outside work is another easy and efficient way to help participants solve their problems. Therefore, they should take this unique opportunity to acquire valuable skills for their future professional career, which cannot be learnt from a book.

## **AFTER THE WORK PLACEMENT**

### **Evaluating work placements**

The co-ordinator, in cooperation with the receiving co-ordinator and participants, should follow the evaluation procedure as described in the application form. There are many tools and techniques to get the necessary feedback for the final evaluation, such as:

- surveys
- interviews with participants
- reports filled in by participants
- evaluation sheets for participants filled in by their host mentors (sample attached in appendix)
- individual and/or group reports prepared by the receiving coordinator
- Europass mobility, certificates and/or letters of recommendation from the host enterprises
- participant's IWP portfolio (see appendix 1)

The analysis of the evaluation results can be used to identify certain co-ordinator activities which may need improvement due to the information gaps or problems reported.

### **Running the procedure for recognition of the learning outcomes**

This task includes collecting and filing documentation provided by the partners and participants, as the basis for the recognition of the participant's learning outcomes within their study programme.

For work placements in tertiary education there should be no problems because the contents of the training agreements are prepared in accordance with the curriculum and agreed upon by all three parties involved (home institution, student and receiving/host organisation) before the mobility takes place.

The recognition of short-term work placements (up to 3 months) in secondary vocational education, however, differs from country to country, and from institution to institution, depending on the national system and the level of authority of the educational and training institutions.

The recognition and transparency of skills in the EU is one of the most important pre-conditions for successful work placements, as well as for raising awareness of the importance and advantages of the work-based learning abroad. The ECVET (European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training) offers tools for transparent assessment and evaluation of mobility learning outcomes (including work placements) which were developed in many pilot projects funded within the LLP:

<http://www.euroapprenticeship.eu/en/ecvet-resources.html> .

The synthesis of the latest results from these pilot projects can be found in the brochure 'Using ECVET for mobility and lifelong learning – 'Lessons from the second generation of ECVET pilot projects' on:

<http://www.ecvet-projects.eu/Documents/Seminars/ECVET%20Brochure%20October%202013%20web%20ready%20rgb.pdf>

The co-ordinator should study this exhaustive resource and try to find relevant projects (eg developed for the same sector/field as the planned work placements) with tools which can be used (even if slightly adapted) for the assessment, evaluation and recognition with regard to the national VET system.

### **Sharing examples of good practice**

The co-ordinator is expected to share examples of good practice among his/her colleagues, potential future mobility participants, and decision makers on the national level (if possible). The past participants should be involved intensively in all activities as promoters of the benefits gained through the work-based learning experience. Such activities can contribute to the further promotion of work placements in educational and economic sectors and lead to improvements in planning, organizing and implementing mobility.

## **RECEIVING COORDINATORS**

Many tasks of the receiving coordinators are closely linked to those of the sending coordinator because most of them depend on each other. They fit into the sequence of activities performed by both coordinators in order to ensure a successful work placement.

If the co-ordinator represents a receiving organisation which is not the host organisation, his main tasks are:

## BEFORE THE WORK PLACEMENT

### Contacting host companies and enterprises

As the co-ordinator is expected to find work placements tailored to the needs of the foreign trainees, it is vital to inform the potential host organisation about:

- the participants' professional profiles
- their communication skills in languages used or required in the companies within which they might be working
- duration of the work placement, as well as
- specific conditions or regulations which apply to participants regarding their national
- legislation (eg maximum number of working hours per day, overtime or working time limits, no night shifts etc.)

### Providing the sending coordinator with information and documents

The package with all necessary information and documents should include:

- presentation materials about the host companies:
- their policy, vision
- dress code
- work placements available
- names of the mentors
- the way(s) of monitoring work placements
- assessment & evaluation
- certification documents, etc.
- accommodation and local travel arrangements
- cultural programme and linguistic preparation during the placement (if agreed upon in the partner contract)

All required documents, particularly partner contracts and training agreements (duly signed and stamped) should be sent to the receiving organisation before the work placement period starts, preferably before the departure of the mobility participants.

## DURING THE WORK PLACEMENT

### Organising an introductory meeting for the participants

It is advisable to make the first contact with the participants at the point of their arrival, thus making them feel welcome and safe right from the start. If they are supposed to work at different enterprises the co-ordinator should accompany them on their very first working day and introduce them to their mentors who are then responsible for providing further information about the work placements (see Chapter 3 - Tips for Mentors)

### **Monitoring work placements**

The receiving coordinator is expected to monitor work placements in co-operation with the mentors in enterprises by using monitoring techniques and tools as agreed upon in the partner contract (eg regular phone or e-mail contact, on-site visits, short interviews with mentors and participants, interim surveys etc.).

He/she should provide mentors with his/her contact data and contact hours and offer assistance in problem-solving if necessary. At the same time, he/she should give periodical feedback to the sending coordinator.

The most important issues to be focused on during the monitoring are: the participants' satisfaction with the work placement:

- the tasks assigned to them match their skills but still offer enough opportunities/ challenges to upgrade their overall competencies)
- his/her ability to integrate into working teams and their way of dealing with language and cultural differences (flexibility, tolerance, development of intercultural competences etc.).

## **AFTER THE WORK PLACEMENT**

### **Evaluating and certifying participant's learning outcomes**

The participant's overall impression of the benefits gained during the work placement depends to a great extent on the recognition of his/her learning outcomes and certificates. Such recognition, may, in turn, increase a participant's employability or foster his/her professional career. Therefore, it is a great responsibility of the receiving coordinator to ensure that all documents (as specified in the partner contract) are filled in correctly before the participant's departure. The coordinator may assist mentors in host enterprises in completing the required documents or encourage them to write letters of recommendations for participants with outstanding learning outcomes.

**CHECKLIST- COORDINATORS** (see Appendix 2) offers additional support in the form of a quick overview of the most important tasks to be done before, during and after the work placement.

## PART 3: TIPS FOR MENTORS

### Introduction

The word **mentor** as used in this guide stands for a person who is responsible for introducing, coaching, monitoring, evaluating and certifying international work placements in a host company.

In large companies it is usually the IWP (receiving) co-ordinator who provides mentors of work placements in different departments with all the necessary information and explains their main tasks related to monitoring and supervision of international students during their work placement. One of the most important tasks is to give regular feedback on the students' performance in the work place to the co-ordinator and, of course, to students themselves, too. In small companies/enterprises, however, the mentor and the co-ordinator of IWP are often the same person.

It is important that mentors are well-informed about the planned work placements and included in the preparation and organisation activities right from the beginning. Of course, it depends on the size of the company/enterprise how the whole process is structured and organized. Only good co-operation among all parties involved can ensure a successful work placement, which leads to efficient problem-solving.

### BEFORE THE WORK PLACEMENT

#### Preparing work placements

If you are appointed mentor for IWP in your company you should request relevant documentation such as students' Europass CVs, Letters of Motivation and detailed information about the skills to be acquired during the mobility period (according to the goals of the mobility project or personal goals of the students who apply for the work placement on their own). The main activities in the preparatory phase include:

- studying documentation provided by the sending organisation: it is advisable to make a list of professional profiles (skills, experience, language competences etc) of the students selected for an IWP in your company
- matching the goals and expectations of the students with appropriate work placements in your company as far as possible. Here, you should consider tasks and responsibilities that are career-related, challenging, and realistic for the student to complete. Contact the sending organisation if your company cannot offer work placements which meet the needs of the students and try to find a compromise, ie offer substitute tasks or agree upon the "minimum package" of tasks at the workplace which would still be sufficient for the recognition of the work placement at student's home institution.
- informing the sending organisation about the workplaces selected for the students including descriptions of the main tasks assigned to them
- [http://www.euroapprenticeship.eu/img\\_base/toolbox/n6-checklist-for-hosting-institutions-en.pdf](http://www.euroapprenticeship.eu/img_base/toolbox/n6-checklist-for-hosting-institutions-en.pdf)



### **Informing the company staff**

You should inform your company about the duration and contents of the work placements as well as about the students assigned to each individual department. In large companies the managers of departments are usually in charge of reporting about students' performance – assign this task to the company's best people who will then report to the IWP mentor of the company - this function is often assigned to the Human Resources Manager. Ask the staff members to include the student in the social activities of the company, too, such as informal meetings, sports events, birthday parties etc, to develop personal relationships which will contribute to a pleasant and more efficient working atmosphere.

### **Preparing information material**

Although students are usually informed about the selected company before the work placement actually starts, it can be useful to prepare some fact sheets about your company in general as well as a "welcome information package" for students to be handed out at the first meeting (see more on this topic in the following chapter).

## **DURING THE WORK PLACEMENT**

### **Organizing introductory meeting**

The first day in a host company can be stressful for students, particularly for those doing an international work placement for the first time. You should keep in mind that they are suddenly confronted not only with an unknown work environment but also with a new temporary place to live in a foreign country. It is therefore of great importance to help them adapt to the new circumstances from the very beginning.

The best way is to organize an introductory meeting, give them a warm welcome and provide them with all information related to their new work place and team. Many past mobility participants reported "fear of the unknown" as the main reason for being less self-confident and/or not taking initiative than usual. If they are informed and know well what to expect they will be able to perform their tasks and to solve problems better. It is therefore advisable to have a "welcome information package/folder" ready in a written form and hand it out to the students at the introductory meeting. It should provide particularly the following information:

- the presentation of the company (its vision, policy and values, products, services and customers; data protection and confidentiality etc)
- contact persons (their names, titles, functions and availability). Determine what time and where you and these contact persons will be available during the week for students to access

- the roles and responsibilities in the new work team
- working hours, times for meals and breaks
- house rules such as procedures for reporting ill, for late arrival, rules about smoking, the use of the internet, dress code
- security ( types of alarms, use of safety clothes and shoes, name badges, etc)
- risks related to the assigned work place(s) - check whether all risks are covered by the student's insurance
- work procedures and quality control
- equipment and responsibility for the equipment
- culture and tradition-specific information
- personal work plan and time schedule for each student (deviations from the student's Learning Agreement, if any, should be explained and discussed individually when necessary)
- ways of monitoring, and criteria for evaluation of the student's performance at the work place

Follow the link below to find a checklist with detailed information which can help you create a good welcome information folder for students:

[http://www.euroapprenticeship.eu/img\\_base/toolbox/n37-checklist-for-the-trainee-introduction-to-the-company-en1.pdf](http://www.euroapprenticeship.eu/img_base/toolbox/n37-checklist-for-the-trainee-introduction-to-the-company-en1.pdf)

### **Monitoring the work placements**

An important task of an IWP mentor is to monitor the work placements by getting regular feedback regarding student's work performance through the evaluation process and daily interaction. It is useful to organize a short interview with each student after the first week to check the professional and social aspect of his first impressions and ability to adapt to the new work environment. This is also an opportunity to identify situations which might lead to problems if they are not clarified and/or solved on the spot.

Encourage the student to express his feelings openly and offer solutions. The main monitoring activities may include:

- short daily interaction with students if time allows
- maintaining regular contact with the sending organisation/co-ordinator
- assessing student's learning outcomes at work place (according to the Learning Agreement)
- preventing problems or conflicts and mediation/help in solving them - follow the link to find out basic rules how to act and react in such situations:  
<http://internship2industry.eu/supervisors/eng/4-extras/4.2/>
- assistance in dealing with intercultural differences – see useful tips on:  
<http://internship2industry.eu/supervisors/eng/4-extras/4.1/> and  
[http://internship2industry.eu/tools/M2\\_4.1\\_D1\\_Tips\\_For\\_Managing\\_Intercultural\\_Communication.pdf](http://internship2industry.eu/tools/M2_4.1_D1_Tips_For_Managing_Intercultural_Communication.pdf)

## AFTER THE WORK PLACEMENT

### Evaluating the work placements

The main purpose of the evaluation of the work placement is to give feedback to students and their sending institution on quality of the student's performance and to provide the basis for the recognition of his/her international work experience at his home institution. The evaluation criteria are usually defined by the sending institution which may provide the host company with evaluation sheets adapted to its own system of assessing and recognizing the participants learning outcomes. If not, mentors can evaluate the work placement by adapting the evaluation sheets for assessing the employees of their company or use the sample evaluation sheet on:

<http://www.euroapprenticeship.eu/en/evaluation-of-the-placement.html>

(free registration necessary)

Students will appreciate this feedback since it helps them understand where they are proficient and where they need to improve.

As an IWP mentor, you should also evaluate and analyse the implementation of international work placements:

- from the aspect of the company - to identify benefits and advantages (or disadvantages) of hosting international students in taking part in European mobility actions. You can use or adapt the sample of a self-assessment sheet for host companies from:  
<http://www.euroapprenticeship.eu/en/validation-recognition-and-transfer-of-the-training-period.html>
- from the aspect of the students - use or adapt example of the work placement assessment on:  
<http://internship2industry.eu/supervisors/eng/3-after-the-internship/3.1/>  
(see Forms: Internship Assessment of the Trainee -Sweden)

Such analysis can serve as the basis for further improvements in organisation and implementation of the future international work placements.

### Completing documents

The mentor's tasks related to completing and issuing documents are of utmost importance for the students since the documentation required by the sending institution serves as the basis for the recognition of students' learning outcomes within their study programme. Make sure that all documents are stamped and signed by the authorized person. Certificates and letters of recommendation issued by your company should be written/printed on the paper with the company's letterhead. The most frequently required documents are:

- **the Europass Mobility**

This is a document to record knowledge and skills acquired in another European country by any person moving to a European country to learn or acquire a work experience. It is available in all EU languages. The sending institution is responsible

for obtaining the Europass Mobility document from the National Europass Centre in the home country. It is then filled in by both, the sending institution and the receiving institution/host company.

The host company's stamp and signature are considered as evidence that the student has successfully completed the work placement. Before signing, check whether the tasks listed in the Europass Mobility document are in accordance with the Learning Agreement and with the work placement programme of the student.

For more information about Europass Mobility and samples follow the link:

<http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/documents/european-skills-passport/europass-mobility>

Useful tips for filling in the Europass Mobility document can be found on:

[http://internship2industry.eu/tools/M2\\_3.1\\_D1\\_How\\_to\\_fill\\_in\\_the\\_Europass\\_Mobility.pdf](http://internship2industry.eu/tools/M2_3.1_D1_How_to_fill_in_the_Europass_Mobility.pdf)

- **Certificate** of the company about the completion of work placement by the student (personal data of the student, duration of the work placement, departments, main tasks and the title/number of the mobility project if the placement was implemented within the Erasmus+ programme). If students attended an in-company course or a special short-term training (eg, the use of specific machines or equipment, HACCP course, motivation workshop etc), additional certificates may be issued and attached
- **Letter of recommendation** for students with outstanding performance and/or achievements during the work placement
- **Feedback report** to the sending organisation: This applies particularly for groups from the same sending partner and provides a short summary/analysis of the mobility in general (evaluation sheets for each student should /may be attached)

### Sharing good practice

Your positive experience can be motivating and helpful at the local, national and/or international level. At the same time, it will make the international/European dimension of your company visible and transparent. You can:

- post pictures and comments of the students on the web page of your company, social media such as Facebook and Twitter
- include information about IWPs in articles about your company in newspapers and/or professional magazines
- present your experience at promotional and other relevant events such as workshops, seminars, conferences, etc

By sharing examples of good practice you can promote the benefits that well-organized and implemented international work placements bring to the company. It is important to make evident that companies which offer possibilities for young upcoming professionals to get international work experience are doing sustainable work to develop the quality of the future professionals.

**CHECKLIST- MENTORS** (see Appendix 3) offers additional support in the form of a quick overview of the most important tasks to be done before, during and after the work placement.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix1: CHECKLIST-STUDENTS

WHEN	WHAT (task description)	TICK when done
<b>BEFORE</b>	Define your motivation and reasons for doing an international work placement (in priority order)	
	Get all information about the application procedure at your school or contact potential host employers directly	
	Prepare all documents for the application ( Europass CV, Letter of motivation or letter of Application (Cover letter)	
	Find accommodation (get a written confirmation for your booking)	
	Arrange travel from your home city to the destination city in the host country (buy tickets, book seats in advance if necessary)	
	Prepare documents needed: - ID or passport (check validity) - European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) - insurance card/policy (accident /third party liability insurance) - International Student Identity Card (ISIC) - visa and work permit (if necessary)	
	Make your financial plan	
	Do the linguistic preparation in co-operation with your sending coordinator and/or language teacher(s)	
	Do the cultural preparation in co-operation with your sending coordinator and/or teacher(s)	
	<b>DURING</b>	Prepare for the first meeting or interview at the host enterprise
Inform your mentor (and sending coordinator) about any problems immediately- be open but polite and ready to make compromises		
Socialize with your new co-workers and local people during your free time-learn about their way of living, traditions and culture		
Communicate as much as possible –try to learn the basics of the language of your host if you don't speak it		
Collect all documents about your work placement at the host employer or receiving coordinator, particularly the certificate about the completion of the WP and Europass Mobility document.		
<b>AFTER</b>	Write a Thank-you-letter to your mentor/host company	
	Write the final report for your sending institution	
	Complete the International Work Placement PORTFOLIO	
	Share your experience with the teachers and students at your school and broad public (presentations, Facebook , Twitter, blog posts)	

## Appendix 2: CHECKLIST- COORDINATORS

WHEN	WHAT (task description)	TICK when done
<b>SENDING COORDINATORS</b>		
<b>BEFORE</b>	Find suitable receiving/host partners (check their references)	
	Prepare data for the application form (professional profiles of the students, planned duration and contents of the work placements)	
	Organize and implement the selection process	
	Organize a meeting with selected participants	
	Prepare documents for work placements (partner contracts, Learning Agreements for students, Europass mobility etc.)	
	Organize travel and accommodation for the students (secondary VET providers) or assist them in arranging travel and accommodation (tertiary VET providers)	
	Organize the linguistic and cultural preparation for students or give them advice and information on sources/links for the preparation	
<b>DURING</b>	Monitor the work placements by keeping regular contact with the host company and students	
	Assist in problem solving if necessary	
<b>AFTER</b>	Evaluate work placements based on the certificates, Europass mobility, feedback questionnaires, final reports, IWP Portfolio)	
	Implement the procedure for the recognition of the student's learning outcomes	
	Share examples of good practice	
<b>RECEIVING COORDINATORS</b>		
<b>BEFORE</b>	contact host companies to find suitable work placements	
	provide the sending institution with detailed information about the selected work placements and about the documents required	
<b>DURING</b>	organize an introductory meeting with the mobility participants	
	accompany them on the first day in the host company	
	monitor the work placements by getting regular feedback from the host companies	
<b>AFTER</b>	collect feedback from the host companies to evaluate the work placements	
	check whether the certificates and/or Europass mobility documents were issued by the host companies for all students	
	send all documents to the sending institution in due time if they were not handed out to the mobility participants before their departure	

### Appendix 3: CHECKLIST-MENTORS

WHEN	WHAT (task description)	TICK when done
<b>BEFORE</b>	Select suitable work places in your company based on the professional profiles of the students, their Europass CVs and Letters of motivation	
	Inform the receiving and sending coordinator about the selected work places and main tasks	
	Inform the staff about the mobility participants, duration and purpose of the work placements	
	Prepare a "welcome information package" for the mobility participants	
	Prepare the introductory meeting or interview	
<b>DURING</b>	Organize and implement the introductory meeting with the mobility participants (presentation of the company, round tour, handing out the information material etc.)	
	Monitor work placements: - get regular feedback on students' performance from their superiors - get regular feedback from students (short daily interactions) - assist in problem-solving if necessary	
	Assess students' learning outcomes (evaluation sheets)	
	Maintain contact with the sending and receiving coordinator	
<b>AFTER</b>	Prepare, stamp and sign documents for evaluation and certification: - fill in the Europass mobility documents - issue certificates about the completion of the work placement - write a short report (optional)	
	Evaluate and analyse work placements from the aspect of the students and your company	
	give suggestions for improvements	
	share examples of good practice (within and outside the company)	
	promote the benefits of quality international work placements for the company	