



**Pro Move
Promotion of Long Term Mobility in VET**

Intercultural
seminar for
companies

This document is specifically made for companies with the intention of improving the environment for foreign interns. Over the years, the amount of students doing an internship abroad has increased, not only in higher education, but also in VET. The European Union tries to reduce youth employment by promoting internships abroad in general, but the focus of this particular program, Pro Move, lies with the objective of the European Union to promote longer internships, with duration of at least 6 months, within the Erasmus+ program. However, this document can be used for all companies hosting international interns.

The idea of sending students abroad for their internship can be very rewarding for both the sending party as the receiving party. However, in reality, we found out that companies are sometimes unsure about what they can expect from an international intern and what they actually need to provide to interns. The following document is for companies and the workplace tutors, in order for them to help develop people's skills and to give them the possibility to get a job and survive in the outside world.

The main purpose for students doing an internship is to improve their employability. An internship in another country can be really helpful in improving their employability. For this reason, it would be highly beneficial if interns in your company have good guidance so that they have the possibility to learn a lot and maybe even more importantly will develop themselves as a person. Having an intern in your company should not only be beneficial to the students, but also for your company. With the following steps, this should prepare you for an intern in your company.

Preparation phase

Before students will actually start working at your company, it is crucial to think about some things:

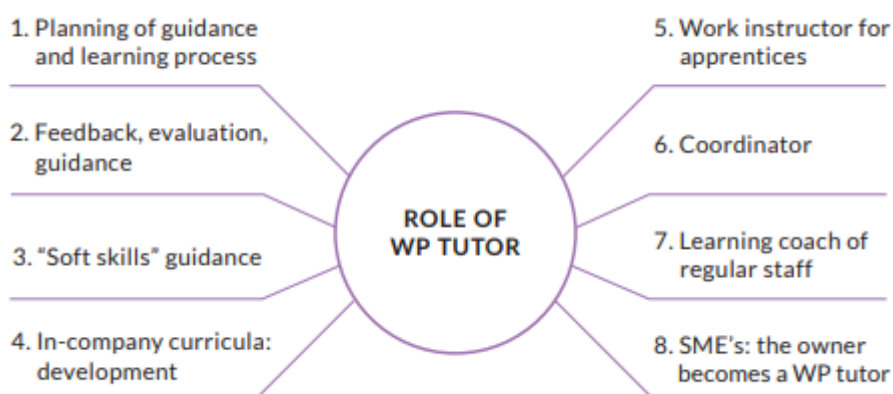
- **Think of a job description:** First of all, this will make sure that you don't make the mistake of thinking that interns are there to do all the work you don't want to do. Their job is not to get your coffee or pick up lunch when you're too busy to go yourself. Interns are not 'slave labor.' Secondly, if you already thought about what the description of their job is, you already have an idea what interns will actually do in your company and you don't have to search for things to occupy them while they are already there. Thirdly, if you give students a specific description of their job at your company, they have something clear to put on their résumés, which will improve their employability.

What are the things you should think of in the job description?

- Explain the organization's goals and mission
- Outline the intern's responsibilities and potential tasks/projects
 - Describe skills that can be developed
- Clarify the duration of the internship
 - Hours required per week / semester (fall, spring, summer)
 - Flexibility with schedule or specific hours

- Who will be mentoring the intern: It depends on how big your company is, whether you will look after a student yourself or if you let one of your employees mentor the interns. In case of the latter option, make sure that these employees also know beforehand what it actually entails to mentor a student. Either way, it is important to plan some time to show the intern around in the first week and have some time each week to check up on their intern.
- Where will the intern work and what do they need: It might seem as a really basic thing to think of, but for students this can make a really big difference in feeling welcome at a company. Your company should think about a workplace for the intern, preferably together with regular employees and also ask yourself what the materials are that interns need at your company and with what you can provide them.
- Read the CV and motivational letter from the student: The intermediary company that provides you with the interns has information about the students. Make sure that before you actually meet the intern, you also read their CV and motivational letter to get some insights about the person you will be working with. If you have any questions regarding the information in these documents you have prepared for the first meeting with the student. Furthermore, some companies also find it highly beneficial to have a Skype meeting before the student actually comes, to find out whether the students is qualified for the job and whether language will become a big barrier.

After reading these points in the preparation phase, we will continue to go to the phase where the students actually start to work at your company. A couple of roles are identified in the following graph for a workplace tutor. However, please note that the roles of workplace tutors in this graph are based on different countries, so not every role might apply to you as company.



Source: Workplace Tutor Europe: NETWORK RECOMMENDATIONS ON LEARNING GUIDANCE IN WORK-BASED LEARNING

As you can see most of the roles of the workplace tutor revolve around guidance, feedback and development. These roles are mostly applicable during the actual internship and in the next sector the roles will be further elaborated.

Start of / during the internship

- Create a clear goal from the start: With the start of an internship, discuss with the student, what they want to achieve with this internship. More specifically, what skills do they want to achieve at the end of their internship. This for instance could be creating their own project. There are a lot of possibilities as long as it is something the student did on their own.

- Explanation of the work floor/ground rules: The first days when your intern starts at your company, take the time to explain the basic things at work. This can be a bit time consuming, because interns might not have a lot of

experience in the work field. In this case, make some time to make sure that everything is clear to the intern. This seems logical, however, this does not only mean the actual work your intern has to do. This can also mean what the normal working hours are at the job, what are the appropriate clothes to wear to work, how do they greet people, can they bring their phone to the work floor or only use it during their breaks etc.

GERMANY  - 10 minutes Expects you to be early
NETHERLANDS  - 5 minutes Be early, but not too early

What time do you have to be present at work?

In every country greeting people is different. If the students meet somebody new, what is the appropriate behavior at your working place? Where one country will prefer shaking the hand another country can kiss the cheeks.



- Help from the start: For some companies it might be unrealistic to let the intern be completely independent from the start. You should make sure that there is somebody not only explaining the tasks at the beginning, but also be part of the task in order to make sure that the intern will fully understand the task. When you think that an intern is able to do the work without full guidance, it is crucial that you still keep an eye on them in the beginning. The main reason for this is that if the intern goes in the wrong direction, you are able to step in. Don't forget to explain WHY you are stepping in and more importantly say that you are only doing that to make them learn the right way. Otherwise interns may have the feeling that they are being criticized too much. Just keep in mind that **honesty usually is best.**

 - Cultural differences: Something that is normal to you, doesn't have to feel normal for the students. Considering that your intern will come from a different country, it is also possible that some customs that you find normal are completely strange to them. For example different words can mean different things in different countries like grand in Ireland means fine but grand in England means big. Another example, in some cultures students will only do what is asked for and nothing more, because they are not used to it. It could also be about lunch breaks, in some countries it is normal to have 1 hour breaks during lunch, while others might have less time for having lunch and do you take your own lunch with you to the company or are you eating somewhere else. These kinds of things could be good to know for interns when they are in their first week. As example, in the Netherlands it is normal to drink coffee at the company, while in Spain you would go out for drinking coffee. **It is important to think about the things that seem normal to you, but might be different for people from other countries.**
-
- Giving feedback: It is not only important to have monitoring meetings with the hosting company, but it is also good for a student to hear on a regular basis what they are doing well and what they can improve. However, as a workplace tutor you should be aware that you try to avoid negative feedback. Instead of saying that students are doing something wrong, it is better to say: "I like what you did but, in the future it might be better if you did it like this".

 - Inclusion in your company: During the internship period make sure the interns feel included in your company together with the other employees. This can be something really simple as inviting them to a work lunch outside of the office, or if you have a teambuilding exercise you could let them participate. This creates the feeling for them that they are welcome in the company and may have the result that they settle into your company sooner.

After the internship

At the end of the internship, it might be strange to realize that the intern is going away and hopefully they became a real part of your company. Before you know it the internship period has gone by, but nevertheless, there are several things you can or have to do for the intern.

- Final meeting: At the end of the internship you will have the opportunity to give some final advice, compliments and feedback for your intern. Considering the amount of time that you have worked together with your intern and the developments you have seen your intern make, you should be able to give some future job advice to your intern.
- Saying thanks: To thank the intern for all the hard work done at your company and the nice addition the intern had to your team/company you could do something fun with the intern. To give an example, you could for instance take the intern on a boat tour through the city you live in, or you can give them something to remind them of their incredible time at your company or the country you are from. It could be anything and it doesn't have to be something very time consuming or expensive, it's the thought that counts and the intern will feel really appreciated after it.
- Letter of recommendation: In the case of the intern going back to their own country after the internship, you could write them a letter of recommendation for their future employers. This would be really beneficial for them when interns are searching for their first job after they have graduated. They will have a lot of experience after working at your company and it is rewarding to help your interns at a job in their own country.
- Work prospects at your company: In the case of a very good internship, you could propose the intern to come work for your company. The only downside to this is that this usually only will happen if the students just graduated, which is the case with this specific PRO MOVE project.

Hopefully, this document will provide you with some tools to help you during the student's internship at your company. Not every single point has to be necessary for you to follow and it could even be that some things don't work at your company. However, these guidelines should help you to think of the intern's perspective and improve the experience for both you as a company and the student doing the internship. Keep in mind that maybe not everything will go exactly as you want, but as long as you keep communicating with the interns you should be able to work it out.

Finally, as a workplace tutor you have to keep in mind that not every student is the same. It is possible that you will have a student which is not motivated or giving you a hard time. Try to have a conversation about it, making sure that you will tell a person what actually is expected from them and if they are unable to meet these tasks, you can contact the hosting organization and let them help you with your situation.