

Quality Framework for Traineeships

Information about yourself

Are you replying as an individual or on behalf of your organisation? -open reply-(compulsory)	Our contribution is made on behalf of the UNI-KEY consortium (www.uni-key.eu) - an international project funded by the LLP/Erasmus programme (University-Enterprise cooperation scheme)
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Please indicate your organisation's name (if applicable) -open reply-(optional)	University Fulda, Institut inter.research e.V., University Aveiro, ITC, CESAF, K2C, CCBI, WOW
In which country are you and/or your organisation based? -open reply-(compulsory)	Germany, Portugal, Spain, Italy, South Africa, Belgium, Greece

Reactions to the proposal on a Quality Framework for Traineeships

In your view is there a need for European level action regarding the quality of traineeships? -open reply-(compulsory)

We truly believe that there is a need for a European level action regarding the quality of traineeships. However it is a special task to assure the quality of traineeships abroad within Europe that are not covered by EU- programmes like Leonardo and Erasmus. They should at least fulfil a minimum standard of quality based on substantiated quality criteria. The regional perspective should be taken into account - some regions are confronted with high youth unemployment, other regions are confronted with lack of qualified applicants for open posts, i.e. the role of traineeships will differ. At the same time, it is important to assure that traineeships covered by the EU- programmes play a pioneering role. The quality of those traineeships should go beyond the necessary minimum and should realise the full learning potential of a work placement abroad, thus providing an example of best practice. They should provide a framework to gain skills and horizontal competencies like the following: • linguistic skills, • intercultural competences (e.g. ability to understand one's own and foreign cultures and to use intercultural communication in an effective and efficient way), • entrepreneurial competences (e.g. ability to manage challenges and recognise one's own strengths, weaknesses, and chances and using them for the own advancement) • European competences (e.g. ability to act as an ambassador for the European Union and the values and concepts European integration is based on, thus trainees can be turned from beneficiaries of EU-funding into promoters of the European idea) Ideally, the acquisition of linguistic skills and horizontal competences should be gained in a combined way (e.g. using "Content integrated language learning"). As the acquisition of skills and horizontal competences does not happen automatically, appropriate funding needs to be provided for the preparatory and monitoring actions preceding and accompanying the traineeship abroad (including the use of new m

What should be the scope of such an initiative? -open reply-(compulsory)

This initiative should have a large scope. The initiative should provide instruments to organize and evaluate traineeships, instruments that could be used by universities, students and enterprises and also by the coordinators of mobility programmes. Those instruments should also allow beneficiaries of the previous internships to interact, sharing their experiences, difficulties and suggestions. In general those instruments should aim at highlighting and awarding good practice and good examples – thus demonstrating that successful traineeships can turn into a great marketing tool for an employer – turning the student into an "ambassador" of the company, of the brand or even of the sector the company is working in.

What should be the form that such an initiative at EU level should take? -open reply-(compulsory)

We recommend that the initiative includes the establishment of a platform for students (web site, mobile application), where they could evaluate their traineeships. This will allow to give voice to students, making them feel involved in the process (rating about fulfilment of quality commitment). We furthermore recommend to create a EU-level quality award or label. So far Programme labels such as the Erasmus Quality Seal (DAAD – German National Agency, Erasmus/LLP) are only awarded in a few member states. Such labels should awards educational and intermediary organisation for excellence in mobility programme management on a European level. Another award or label could highlight best practice on the side of companies, i.e. employers of (international) trainees. Intermediary organisations/ educational organisations could function as a labelling institution. European Programmes including the structural funds should foresee a programme, which provides the means to institutions to evaluate candidates for such awards and it should foresee a strong network of such institutions to prevent a fragmentation and multitude of labels and award criteria.

In your view are the elements of a high quality traineeship proposed in the attached Staff Working Document relevant?

-open reply-(**compulsory**)

The elements proposed in the document are relevant, particularly the issues regarding European regulations for internships, which should be applied by all member states. Regarding the quality framework, the items presented are very important, namely the clear definition of goals and the reasonable duration of the internships.

What further elements would you suggest for consideration? -open reply-(**optional**)

Compared to the “European Quality Charter for Mobility” some aspects are missing, which are relevant for traineeships abroad in the framework of European programmes (like Erasmus and Leonardo da Vinci programmes). Traineeships within European programmes should fulfil a quality standard beyond the minimum, that is why the following aspects are still important (based on “European Quality Charter for Mobility”):

- Information and guidance should be provided for the trainee concerning international mobility and the conditions in which it can be taken up, about the role and tasks of the sending and hosting organisation and about the various education and training systems.
- General preparation of the trainees should include linguistic, pedagogical, administrative, legal, personal and cultural aspects, and information on financial aspects, as necessary.
- Logistical support should be provided to trainees if necessary (e.g. concerning travel arrangements, insurance, residence or work permits, social security).
- Reintegration and evaluation: trainees should be given guidance on how to make use of competences and skills acquired during the traineeship. Where necessary, help with reintegration into the social, educational or professional environment of the home country should be made available. Additionally, training of tutors at host organisations (especially when those are small or medium enterprises) should be foreseen, providing them guidelines and allow for evaluation of tutors/host organisations. Intermediary organisations/ educational organisations can only meet the requirements of the quality criteria provided that they receive appropriate funding. The increase of quantity shall not be on the expense of quality – the contrary is true: if quantity in European programmes is promoted on the expense of quality the whole system of quality assurance of traineeships will be undermined.

Do you have any other comments?

-open reply-(**optional**)

We recognize and support the contribution of EU-traineeships to European integration, through: - Transnational knowledge transfer; - Transnational university-enterprise cooperation (link education and work); - Transnational entrepreneurship (especially when traineeships are done in young and owner driven enterprises) ; In order to exploit this potential of European traineeships we must create more awareness of it among all stakeholders: educational organisations, enterprises, policy makers and the student themselves. We need to make sure that students are not regarded as beneficiaries of Eu-funding only, when they participate in EU mobility programmes but that they are ambassadors - for their home university and region, when they go abroad - for their host organisation and region, when they return home - for the European Union and the “European idea” We also consider an evaluation and follow-up of the participant students to be important (which needs to be organised and coordinated on a European level), so that the impact of the traineeship on their success on the labour market and their contribution to transnational cooperation, as described above, can be assessed.