



# ELVETE - Employer-Led Vocational Education and Training in Europe

LEONARDO DA VINCI multilateral network  
Project number: 539154-LLP-1-2013-1-UK-LEONARDO-LNW



Kurazh - Bulgaria

## Table of Contents

General information about the programme .....	3
2) Research and Contextualisation.....	3
3) Case study .....	6
3.5 Interviews.....	7
General introduction: .....	8
3.5.2 Content of the interviews .....	11
3.5.2 Content of the interviews .....	13
3.5.2 Content of the interviews .....	15

## General information about the programme

### 2) Research and Contextualisation

#### *a) Introduction. Historical approach and state of play*

Learning no longer stops at the school gates. The world of business and employment is evolving all the time, and this process is accelerating. New products, services and technologies demand new skills from workers. In order to cope with the growing demand for a better-educated work force, nowadays schools all over the world try to incorporate practical experience into school curriculum. This initiative aims to better prepare students for their career endeavours and to build a culture of training and lifelong learning to enable workers and employers to keep their skills and competences up to date. This case study aims to examine the success and failure and the advantages and disadvantages of internship programs in Bulgaria.

Firstly in this case study an overview of the structure of the Bulgarian education system will be provided with the aim to introduce the readers to the scenery of the Bulgarian education process and how the internship programs fit into the school curriculum. This is going to be followed by a discussion about relevant national and local policies and an outline of strategies and on-going projects. Last but not least this case study will provide a thorough evaluation report of a real life example.

The Education in Bulgaria is mandatory until the age of 16. The school year consists of 2 equally divided terms. The first term lasts from 15th September until the end of January, after a short one week break the second term commences in the first week of February and finishes in May or June. The education system consists of the following levels: Pre-primary school (kindergarten) which is optional, primary (grades 1 through 4), lower secondary/ junior high school (grades 5 through 7), higher secondary (grades 8 through 12) and higher education. School children who have successfully completed grade 4 obtain the Certificate for Primary Education. The Certificate for Elementary Education is issued for the successful completion of grade 8.

Secondary education in Bulgaria (upper level) can be divided in general education and vocational training. The general secondary education on its part divides in comprehensive one and specialized one. There are comprehensive schools of general education (3-4 years of attendance) and specialized secondary schools (4-5 years of attendance). The admission to the specialized schools is upon completion of grade 7 or grade 8 and successful passage of the entry exams, corresponding to the school profile (in Bulgarian language and literature, mathematics, humanities etc.). The types of schools offering a secondary education are as follows:

- Secondary comprehensive schools, they cover: primary school level – grades 1 through 4; junior high school – grades 5 through 8 and secondary school level – grades 9 through 11.
- Specialized schools with emphasis on foreign languages (language schools) – admission after grade 7 and upon entry exams. They cover grades 8 through 12/13.
- Specialized secondary schools – admission upon completion of grade 8 (theses are schools with emphasis either on science and/or mathematics, or on humanities, or sports, or arts etc.) They cover grades 9 through 12/13.

Vocational secondary education is available at the vocational-technical and in the technical schools. The vocational-technical schools offer three years of training upon completion of grade 8

and 5 years of training upon completion of grade 7. Both result in specialized secondary education. These schools offer also other forms of training, such as evening courses, external or on-site training, in order to enable students at the age of 16 and above to acquire qualification. Some of this practical activities are mandatory and come as part of the school curriculum.

The higher education system in Bulgaria comprises various forms of programs and curricula upon the completion of the secondary level. At present the higher education system unites universities, specialized institutions of higher education (academia, institutes) and colleges.

In Bulgaria there is the option to obtain your education at a state school, municipality school or private school. The majority of students attend a state school, however in recent years the popularity of private education is growing.

#### *b) VET systems, relevant national and local policy or policies*

- Funding streams
- Types of programmes being developed
- Evaluation, feedback, reports on success

Unfortunately Bulgaria does not have a long-standing tradition with internship programmes thus there isn't sufficient code of law to support the Bulgarian internship initiative. However, in recent years the need to develop young human capital in order to ensure higher employment, income and social inclusion has been a priority for the Bulgarian Ministry of labour and social policy. Thus there have been a number of developments towards better policy making on the discussed topic.

The internship programmes involve 3 parties: the students, the employer and the school/ university. The relationship between all parties is currently governed by The Administration law and The Judiciary law. An internship is defined as a method for students to acquire on-the-job training which will considerably increase a young person's employability chances after graduation. The purpose of the internship is to integrate the academic study with meaningful, professional-level experience. It blends the application of theory with the state of the today's practice and thereby enhances the students' professional preparation.

The nature, length and arrangements for work experience vary greatly, however, the Bulgarian government distinguishes between two types of internship schemes – voluntary placement, entirely guided by the student's motivation to achieve higher quality education and training and mandatory placement which counts as part of the school or university curriculum. Depending on the student's academic experience so far some work experience positions offer young people the chance to try their hand at particular tasks, others simply provide an opportunity to watch and learn.

An intern's rights depend on their employment status. If an intern is classed as a worker, then they're normally due the National Minimum Wage. This is usually the case with the voluntary placements, which are organised by a host organisation. This type of internships are managed and planned separately from any school or university. It is the student's motivation to get involved in such initiative and their own responsibility to apply and secure a position on the internship scheme.

These types of internship are governed by the Labor Code.

On the contrary the mandatory placements where students are required to do an internship as part of a school course aren't entitled to the National Minimum Wage thus the internship is in most cases unpaid. The duration of the mandatory initiative usually varies from several weeks up to 3 months and it is conducted outside academically devoted hours.

The traditional definition of work experience, as a short-term full-time placement undertaken during school holidays, doesn't always work for young people. Thus Bulgarian government attempts to increase its efforts towards changing and further developing its national and regional policies in order to be better suited for the current progress in the labor market. The work experience should be thought of in its broadest sense, where it can include any number of activities: for example, site and study visits, mock interviews, mentoring, enterprise competitions and challenges and so on.

### *c) Outline of strategies, projects, programmes etc..*

Rising levels of youth unemployment have increasingly concern the Bulgarian government. The statistical data indicate that young people face specific difficulties in finding their first job. This is attributed to the mismatch between the qualifications of young people and labour market needs, structural economic shifts and the erosion of public spending on integrated pro-employment strategies. Additionally, the situation on the labour market is influences also by the worldwide economic crisis.

In order to improve the conditions for young adults the Bulgarian government and the national representative organisations of employers and employees have made the commitment to cooperate on initiatives to support the integration of young people into the labour market. They want to provide more opportunities for young people to gain work experience by committing to internship schemes and have pledged to help them make the transition from education to work.

As part of a national initiative on 6 June 2012, ministers and representatives from employers' associations and trade unions signed the First Job National Agreement. The agreement aims to create new opportunities for young people in the labour market and to provide employment for at least 22,000 of them, reducing the youth unemployment rate by 5%. The commitments from all partners on this initiative vary. The social partner on the project is responsible to circulate information about current and future opportunities for young people and to encourage employers to recruit young people on internship or permanent contract, providing the chance to acquire initial work experience. Additionally the ministers will support the agreement by developing new initiatives to increase youth employment using additional funding from the state budget and European funds.

The agreement includes a plan for eight programmes and initiatives for young people to be funded under the national action plan for employment and the Operational Programme 'Human Resources Development' 2007–2013. These include the 'New start' (an apprenticeship programme), 'First job', 'New job', 'Development', and 'Start of career' programmes, as well as subsidised schemes encouraging employers to hire the young unemployed. Please read further for details for the relevant programmes:

- New start – This program targets young unemployed people up to the age of 29 whoc are

registered with the Bulgarian Bureau of Labor. The applicant should have any practical experience on the subject they have received their education on. Each placement will continue for 6 months and will be funded by the program. The employer has the responsibility to assign a mentor to each intern.

- First Job – The purpose of this scheme is to provide incentives for employers to hire and train up to 29-year-old unemployed people. Some of the major activities include reimbursement of salaries according to the minimum thresholds for the relevant job, insurance and transportation costs of the employee, if he/she has a different residence
- New Job – Again this scheme is aimed to incentivize employers to hire and train up to 29-year-old unemployed people. The scheme is responsible to purchase equipment for the newly created jobs and reimburse salaries.

#### *d) Evaluation, feedback, reports on success. Advantages and disadvantages*

Information on impact of above-described policies and programmes on the local/regional/national economic system, strengths and weaknesses, areas of improvement.

### **3) Case study**

#### *3.1 Description of the project/programme:*

Please provide a description of the programme you intend to analyse in your case study and contextualize it into a broader policy framework.

#### *3.2 Outline of guideline model (Length, timing...etc)*

Describe the programme in detail providing information about: actors involved, type of actions, length, timing,

#### *3.3 Preconditions for success: advantages and disadvantages.*

Provide information about success factors of the programme, whether it is useful to the target group and to which extent, does it enable students to develop competences in tune with employers' expectations, whether and how do employers engage in definition of training needs and design of training programmes/provisions

### 3.4 Evaluation and impact. Define indicators

Indicators to be defined by the partnership and described accordingly

## 3.5 Interviews

### 3.5.1 Companies involved:

#### **Company 1**

Name of company: Rex Consulting Ltd.

Type of activity: Accounting Services

Status: public/private: Private

Size: 5-10 employees

Level of education targeted: students of 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade (17-19)

Website: [www.rexplovdiv.com](http://www.rexplovdiv.com)

Contact person and role: Maria Vulcheva/ Manager

Email address: [rex.plovdiv@gmail.com](mailto:rex.plovdiv@gmail.com)

#### **Company 2**

Name of company: Nia & Do Rado

Type of activity: Fashion Industry/ Design & Manufacture

Status: public/private: Private

Size: 20-30

Level of education targeted: students of 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade (17-19)

Website: [www.nia-dorado.com](http://www.nia-dorado.com)

Contact person and role: Georgi Genov/ Owner

Email address:

#### **Company 3**

Name of company: EVN

Type of activity: Electricity producer

Status: public/private:

Size: 1000

Level of education targeted: students of 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade (17-19)

Website: [www.evn.bg](http://www.evn.bg)

Contact person and role: HR

Email address: [info@evn.bg](mailto:info@evn.bg)

#### **Company 4**

Name of company: Telecity Group Bulgaria EAD

Type of activity: Data centre collocation services

Status: public/private:

Size:

Level of education targeted: students of 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade (17-19)

Website:  
Contact person and role:  
Email address:

### *3.5.2 Content of the interviews*

#### **Company 1**

##### **General introduction:**

Rex Consulting Ltd head office is based in Sofia and currently has two subsidiary companies - in Varna and in Plovdiv. All offices of Rex Consulting Ltd. employ young talent from different schools and universities around Bulgaria. The following case study is going to reflect on the thoughts and observations of a representative of the Plovdiv office (Rex Consulting Plovdiv Ltd.) on the topic of the mismatch between skills needed by employers and what vocational education and training providers offer.

Rex Consulting Plovdiv Ltd. (RCT Ltd.) is tax & accounting consulting company located in Plovdiv, Bulgaria and is a member of the Association of the Professional Accounting Companies since July 2005. Rex Consulting Plovdiv Ltd provides high-quality professional accounting, payroll and tax services to Bulgarian and international firms from various industries. The company helps its clients to manage their financial and accounting processes in the best way through quality services, based on the highest professional and ethical standards. Although Rex Consulting Plovdiv is a small business enterprise, it aims at building enduring business relations with clients, based on loyalty and trust by providing flexible and innovative solutions in line with the best practices and with an individual approach to each client.

##### *Information on the implementation of the selected programme/project (ASL for Fòrema) in the four companies:*

The internship program at Rex Consulting Plovdiv Ltd. commenced 3 years ago. The initiative employs students from the National High school of Commerce in Plovdiv whose plans are to continue their carrier in the field of accounting and finance.

RCP's main objectives are not only to give the students an opportunity to develop practical skills and knowledge but also to train and retain students with the potential to further their career in RCP.

##### *Relationship company-training agency/VET provider and management of incoming students:*

RCP has build connections to schools independently. Once the initiative has been communicated from RCP to the schools, it is the schools' responsibility to spread the information among the high school students. Unfortunately, RCP employees have noticed that only if the students have enquired about firms willing to employee interns then the information is supplied. The information flows rarely the other way around thus Rex Consult concludes that students are not encouraged enough to acquire practical skills and knowledge and can rarely make an informed decision.

### *Joint design/planning of training path:*

RCP is a relatively small company, employing staff of around 5 people in total; the tasks of each employee are very specific to their clients' needs. Therefore the structure of the internship is designed to meet this characteristic.

Each student is assigned a mentor at the start of the internship. The mentor is responsible to provide support and guidance to the student throughout the internship at RCP.

The internship usually follows the structure below:

1. Induction phase: At first students are made familiar with RCP's client list and the services each of them requires. Additionally, as part of the induction phase the mentor is responsible to introduce interns to all documents and software programs to be used throughout the initiative. Luckily, the students have acquired a substantial basic knowledge on the topic throughout their education at the National High school of Commerce hence the training usually does not start from scratch.
2. Independent work process phase: Once the students feel confident to use the above-mentioned tools he/she will be given particular tasks involving independent work with clients. At first, tight supervision from the mentor will be provided but as the students advance through their placement the responsibilities will vary.
3. Feedback phase: At the end of the internship feedback will be available from all parties of the initiative.

### *Implementation: relations company-VET provider during project implementation*

Rex Consulting Plovdiv has built links to several high schools in Plovdiv as well as to nationally funded EU projects representatives.

By the rules of the Bulgarian high school curriculum system, high schools with industry specific knowledge modules must include mandatory industrial experience in the last 2 years of the education process. Thus, communication between links between schools and employers are encouraged by the government in order to facilitate the process of supply and demand of various internships. However, no particular system is in place up to the present moment. Thus RCP has to contact partner school independently and secure the participants of its internship program on its own.

Additionally, RCP is also looking for interns through EU funded projects. Currently in Bulgaria there are several projects running: New beginning, I can do better, Student internships etc. All of them have similar structures, where the EU encourages both employers and students to get in touch and work together toward the common benefit of better education and service offering. A few students enrolled on the above-mentioned EU projects have approached RCP, with the request to conduct their internship at the company. The structure of this kind of internship is similar to the non-EU funded projects at RCP. The only difference is that both the students and the employer receive funding from the EU and are awarded with an EU certificate at the end of the internship program

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*SWOT Analysis:*

Students gain valuable industry experience, however most of them lack basic initial knowledge about the industry and also RCP notices a high degree of lack of motivation among participants.

1            2            3            **4**            5            6 – The connection to the high schools is very bureaucratic and often occupies vital time off your important day-to-day work tasks

*Students' Skills:*

Training level of the student

• Evaluate the training from 1 to 6 regarding to the following issues:

(i) Technical level

1    2    3    4    5    **6** – Due to the nature of the work conducted in RCP where each employee is legally bound, the technical skills and the knowledge of the accountancy code of law is of great importance.

(ii) IT level

1    2    3    4    **5**    6 – The work at RCP is performed on a PC thus IT skills are a crucial part of the skill requirement.

(iii) Competences to work in a group

1    2    3    4    5    **6** – RCP's work is based on close client relationship thus communication to representatives on daily bases and interpersonal skills are vital.

(iv) Proactivity

1    2    3    **4**    5    6 – RCP is on the opinion that the student is at the beginning stages of development in the fields of accountancy thus it is more important to firmly understand and learn the basics first. Innovation and fresh ideas are always welcome but they are not a prerequisite.

(v) Independence

1    2    3    4    5    **6** – Once a student is trained to perform a task it independent work is essential, however, supervision is always available.

(vi) FOREIGN LANGUAGE

1    2    3    **4**    5    6

*Cooperation company-VET institute/training agency on other projects/initiatives:*

N/A

*Key messages and recommendations:*

RCP sees the internship initiative as an extremely rewarding process. Throughout the placement one can observe the potential some students possess to succeed in the accounting and finance field. Additionally, in case a student has shown the required development, RCP's employees feel more confident to delegate tasks to the student, allowing RCP to focus on finding new clients and growing their business.

## Company 2

### 3.5.2 Content of the interviews

#### *General introduction:*

Nia & Do Rado fashion group is a Bulgarian fashion company based in Plovdiv. The company specializes in the design, manufacturing and distribution of ladies' clothes. The products Nia & Do Rado produces vary between different functions: strictly formal dresses, elegant cloths, sports, corporate and business clothing and uniforms. Nia & Do Rado boasts not only clients from the Bulgarian market but it distributes its products to the international market.

#### *Information on the implementation of the selected programme/project (ASL for Fòrema) in the four companies:*

Nia & Do Rado has a long history in developing and conducting various internship programs. The main purpose of this initiative is to introduce the young talented students to the world of fashion and present all the opportunities for career development it offers. The founder of the company suggests that the motivation for career in the fashion industry among the young population is very low. In his humble opinion the absence of desire for a career development in the fashion industry is due to the lack of relevant information reaching the young population. Therefore through the internship schemes Nia & Do Rado aims to light up the fire of a few new "fashion icons" who would continue the long-standing traditions of the Bulgarian fashion industry.

Additionally Nia & Do Rado works along side directors of high schools and teachers to better promote what options the students have once they enter the world of fashion. This activity aims to raise awareness around the fashion schools and attract new students as well as to advertise a successful career path in the fashion industry.

#### *Relationship company-training agency/VET provider and management of incoming students:*

Unfortunately, Nia & Do Rado does not have the capacity to employ more students from other schools and organizations other than the Professional high school for clothing and design Ana May Plovdiv.

#### *Joint design/planning of training path:*

Nia & Do Rado has build a relationship with the Professional high school of clothing and design Ana May in Plovdiv whose students are regularly placed for an internship at the company. The internship is a mandatory 2-week practical experience as part of each student's study curriculum. Each year 10 to 15 students are employed by Nia & Do Rado to go through a internship scheme arranged in a three stage rotation model: sewing, ironing, work at the cutting room. One or two teachers who serve as mentors throughout the whole internship program accompany the students.

#### *Implementation: relations company-VET provider during project implementation*

Nia & Do Rado was a member of the Association of fashion and textile designers in Bulgaria. As

part of this honorable organization the fashion company participated in an exchange initiative, which included students from Koblenz, Germany. In 2006 – 2007 Nie & Do Rado hosted 13 students to exchange knowledge and skills on the topic of fashion and design outside the borders of their own country. Unfortunately, Nie & Do Rado is no longer a member of the association.

### SWOT Analysis:

1            2            3            4            5            6

Nia & Do Rado recommends that the government should play a greater role in the career guidance for young students and inform students about options for skill and knowledge development outside the classroom. This will not only raise awareness about the possibilities each young adult has as a future career option but it will also popularize the internship programs available and the benefits they offer to students.

### Students' Skills:

#### Training level of the student

- Evaluate the training from 1 to 6 regarding to the following issues:

#### (i) Technical level

1            2            3            4            5            6

#### (ii) IT level

1            2            3            4            5            6

#### (iii) Competences to work in a group

1            2            3            4            5            6

#### (iv) Proactivity

1            2            3            4            5            6

#### (v) Independence

1            2            3            4            5            6

#### (vi) FOREIGN LANGUAGE

1            2            3            4            5            6

### Cooperation company-VET institute/training agency on other projects/initiatives:

N/A

### Key messages and recommendations:

Nia & Do Rado aims to recruit new talent and offer its interns a place for professional development after graduation therefore the company sees the internship programme as an opportunity to communicate to the gifted young population. If successful the students might be offered a permanent position and the chance to continue the success of the business and even expand its current parameters. Unfortunately, Nia & Do Rado observes a decline in student motivation to build a career in the fashion industry, which hinders to some extent the above-mentioned purpose. However, the company is determined to continue this initiative and overcome this obstacle.

## Company 3

### 3.5.2 Content of the interviews

#### *General introduction:*

EVN Group (EVN AG) is an Austrian-based producer and transporter of electricity, one of the largest in Europe having over three million customers in 14 countries. The company also operates in water treatment, natural gas supply and waste management business areas.

EVN Bulgaria Group is a part of EVN Group and also covers business activities in the distribution and sale of electricity, heat supply, energy and emissions trading, as well as development of renewable energy projects. The main companies in EVN Bulgaria Group are EVN Bulgaria Elektrosnabdavane power supply company, EVN Bulgaria Elektrorazpredelenie grid company, EVN Bulgaria Toplofikatsia district heating company. The Group was set up in 2005 with the privatization of the shares in the electricity distribution companies in Southeastern Bulgaria by the Austrian group EVN AG. In 2007, EVN AG acquired also the district heating company in Plovdiv. Since 2012 the Austrian group has been holding 100% of the shares in EVN Bulgaria Elektrosnabdavane and EVN Bulgaria Elektrorazpredelenie companies.

EVN Bulgaria has a long-standing traditions and a substantial experience in working on internship programmes. The placement scheme at EVN Bulgaria has an around 10-year history during which many good and bad practices have been noted and will be shared for the purposes of this case study.

#### *Information on the implementation of the selected programme/project (ASL for Fòrema) in the four companies:*

EVN Bulgaria sees the education stream during an internship initiative as a two way process. Not only is the company aiming to offer an opportunity to the young population to gain some practical experience at an early stage of their education, but also EVN Bulgaria aspires to improve the mentor skills of its employees. The placement schemes main target is to master both the managerial skills of its temporary employees as well as to create possibilities for its own members of staff to improve their skills and knowledge.

Additionally, the internship project at EVN Bulgaria wishes to identify young talent. For the duration of the initiative the company offers a place for the development of some practical skill to complement the already acquired academic knowledge. In the case of successful interning the trainee might be offered an opportunity for a permanent position after graduation. This will benefit both EVN by employee fresh and talented work force but also the students who get a chance for a career development in the electric power industry.

#### *Relationship company-training agency/VET provider and management of incoming students:*

For the 3-month internship EVN Bulgaria advertises to the wide public and accepts application online through appropriate job advertisement websites.

As for the 2-week placement, EVN Bulgaria accepts students from the Vocational School for

electrical engineering and electronics Plovdiv.

### *Joint design/planning of training path:*

The internships at EVN Bulgaria are separated into two distinguishing groups: summer internship for university students and an ongoing 2-week project for high school students during the academic year. Although both of the internship initiatives are structured similarly, some differences could be brought to attention.

The 3-month summer internship has a flexible model, which includes work for one department of the student's choice and an independent and self-contained project on a topic given by a mentor. The student can be proactive and choose to some extent the task he/she performs. On the other hand the 2-week initiative understandably varies in the responsibilities awarded to students. While the 3-month internship scheme includes work for just one department and the student bears the full responsibility for his/her work, the students on the 2-week placement observe the work of several departments and have limited liability. Additionally, instead of an independent project, the interns of the 2-week placement have the task to prepare an end of placement presentation.

Despite the differences mentioned above the structure of the two placements follows the phases below:

1st phase – Induction: The induction day includes overview presentation of EVN what its aims, values and objectives are, complemented by a health and safety and a facilities presentation. This is followed by the allocation of department/s and mentors. The day is concluded by welcoming drink to introduce the students to the informal environment of the company and it is a great opportunity for the students to meet all members of staff.

2nd phase – Work with the mentor on ongoing projects of the company: This phase consists of the day-to-day performance of tasks within the allocated department/s.

3rd phase – Preparation of the project / presentation: The students are given a time span when they could intensively work on their individual task. During this period the workload on other project is usually minimalized. At the end of the 3rd phase students would present their projects.

4th phase – Feedback: On the last day of placement the students have individual feedback sessions with their mentor and group discussion with their team.

### *Implementation: relations company-VET provider during project implementation*

The summer internship initiative is an independent project, which EVN Bulgaria organises internally. In contrast, the EVN Bulgaria's 2-week project is in partnership with the Vocational School for electrical engineering and electronics Plovdiv.

### *SWOT Analysis:*

1            2            3            4            5            6

The number of students who choose to accept a permanent position at EVN Bulgaria has increased in recent years, which the company counts as its greatest success connected with the initiative. This has proved to EVN Bulgaria that the hard work to secure a pleasant atmosphere and a place for prosperity for the young population has paid off

### *Students' Skills:*

#### **Training level of the student**

- Evaluate the training from 1 to 6 regarding to the following issues:

##### (i) Technical level

1      2      3      4      **5**      6 - It is a requirement for the students to have had some qualification in the electric engineering field.

##### (ii) IT level

1      2      3      4      **5**      6 – The basic IT skills are required, mostly this includes expertise on Microsoft office.

##### (iii) Competences to work in a group

1      2      3      4      **5**      6

##### (iv) Proactivity

1      2      3      **4**      5      6 – The internship aims to develop the students' skills thus EVN Bulgaria expects proactivity towards learning rather than showing creativity.

##### (v) Independence

1      2      3      4      5      **6** – EVN Bulgaria expects from its students to show motivation to work independently and willingness to accept responsibility as they go through their internship.

##### (vi) Foreign language

1      2      3      4      **5**      6 – EVN Bulgaria is part of a larger international group thus communication in foreign languages is part of your day-to-day job. For the purposes of the internship scheme the knowledge of foreign languages is not a major prerequisite but it counts as an advantage.

### *Cooperation company-VET institute/training agency on other projects/initiatives:*

n/a

### *Key messages and recommendations:*

- Successful initiative but more motivation for a development in the energy industry would be required from the students in the future

## **Company 4**

### **3.5.2 Content of the interviews**

#### *General introduction:*

The Bulgarian company Telecitygroup Bulgaria EAD (former 3 Di Si AD) has been a part of Telecitygroup Plc., the biggest European operator of data centre collocation services since 2013. The parent company is 1.5 billion pounds market capitalization, listed on the London Stock Exchange – LSE:TCY. It has offices in eleven European countries including Bulgaria and it

operates 42 data centres.

Telecitygroup Bulgaria EAD was founded in 2009 under the name 3 Di Si AD. It is a small company of fifteen employees with 50% technical support specialists. It operates a data centre in its own building of 3000sq.m. providing 24 hour maintenance of its infrastructure. The systems which are under surveillance are:

- low and midvoltage distribution
- uninterruptible power supply systems and batteries
- HVAC and CRAC systems
- fire detection and suppression systems
- a diesel generator backup
- networking systems

*Information on the implementation of the selected programme/project (ASL for Fòrema) in the four companies:*

Telecitygroup Bulgaria provides an internship program for students of Technological School “Electronic systems” who have finished 10 class since 2009. This school was founded in 1988 as part of Technical University – Sofia. The idea behind was to create a school where students are taught computer science and information technology. Twenty one classes of young specialists have graduated there for the last twenty six years. The majority of them are now leading professionals in the field of information and communication technologies in Bulgaria.

The aims of the internship program are to widen the scope of knowledge of the students involved and to give them practical skills. This program gives them the opportunity to receive training for future data centre operators of electrical and mechanical infrastructure.

*Relationship company-training agency/VET provider and management of incoming students:*

Telecitygroup Bulgaria has a pretty close relationship with the school board. The selection process starts with lectures about the activities and services offered at the data centre. Then whole classes are taken to the data centre on an orientation visit – one day in the data centre and its infrastructure. After that an initial assessment takes place with individual interviews with prospective candidates for internship.

There is yet another way to select students for internship. As they have to prepare term and diploma papers, specialists from the data centre actively participate in the mentor and exam part and in this way they have the opportunity to select the most suitable candidates.

As part of their excellent and mutually beneficial cooperation with the school the data centre sponsors different initiatives and events and donates useful equipment to the school. Telecitygroup Bulgaria are sponsors and organizers of the Cisco academy at the school, the facility and equipment of which are funded by the data centre. Moreover, all the lectures and tutorials delivered by the specialists of Telecitygroup Bulgaria are pro bono.

### *Joint design/planning of training path:*

Each intern has his own mentor, personally responsible for his decisions and actions. Interns are personally tutored and explained the specifics of each particular service. There are three types of services offered to the clients of the data centre and this makes the process easy to implement. Interns help with the installation of new elements, they investigate the problems in each of the systems and its elements in detail. Every activity of the interns is performed under the strict surveillance and control of the employees of the data centre.

The internship is part time, usually after school, approximately 20 hours per week for three months.

### *Implementation: relations company-VET provider during project implementation*

Experience has shown that Technological School “Electronic systems” is the only school in Sofia which gives basic knowledge in this field. It is no coincidence that at the moment more than 30% of the employees of the data centre are graduates of TS “Electronic systems”.

There are no government funded programs in this technical sphere because this is a niche business and Telecitygroup Bulgaria is the biggest and dominant player on the market in the region.

### *SWOT Analysis:*

1    2    3    4    5    6

### *Students' Skills:*

2. Training level of the student

Evaluate the training from 1 to 6 regarding the following issues:

(i) Technical level

1    2    3    4    5    6 - students are excellently prepared for the job at hand

(ii) IT level

1    2    3    4    5    6

(iii) Competences to work in a group

1    2    3    4    5    6 – like most of the IT guys students are not very social, not used to working with clients. So efforts are being made to improve their communication skills.

(iv) Proactivity

1    2    3    4    5    6 – interns are highly motivated to see and understand how a real company operates

(v) Independence

1 2 3 4 5 6 – the job involves a lot of risk taking in connection with the clients so all decision making has to be controlled

(vi) Foreign language

1 2 3 4 5 6 - English is a must. In most cases their English is fluent, but a second foreign language – German, French or Spanish is a bonus

*Cooperation company-VET institute/training agency on other projects/initiatives:*

N/A

*Key messages and recommendations:*

The key success of this internship programme is that most of the interns start work in the data centre and others – with clients of the company which makes work much easier for both parts.