

Quality Framework for Traineeships

Deadline for proposal: July 11th 2012

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Questionnaire

Are you replying as an individual or on behalf of your organisation? (between 3 and 200 characters)

We are replying on behalf of the Europemobility Network (www.europemobility.eu).

Please indicate your name (between 3 and 200 characters)

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Please indicate your organisation's name (if applicable) (between 3 and 200 characters)

The following organisations are members of the Europemobility Network (www.europemobility.eu):

- CSCS (Italy, www.cscs.it)
- EfVET (Belgium, www.efvet.org)
- EVTA (European network)
- inter.research e.V. (Germany, www.inter-research.de)
- KCH International (Netherlands, www.kch.nl/international/)
- First Elements (Cyprus, www.firstelements.com.cy)
- La Ligue (France, <http://www.laligue.org/>)
- Chambre Régionale des Métiers Midi-Pyrénées (France, <http://www.crm-midi-pyrenees.fr/>)
- European Minds (Sweden, www.europeanminds.com)
- CBE (Belgium, <http://www.cbe.be/>)

In which country are you and/or your organisation based? (between 3 and 200 characters)

The Europemobility network is based in Italy, Belgium, Germany, Netherlands, Cyprus, France, and Sweden.

In your view is there a need for European level action regarding the quality of traineeships? (between 3 and 2000 characters)

Yes, there is a need for such an initiative that deals with problems such as the potential misuse of trainees as cheap labour, the lack of social security and the lack of regulation/definition of the traineeship (e.g. compulsory or voluntary traineeship, traineeship as part of the curriculum at university, traineeship as part of vocational training, traineeship abroad).

It is a special task to assure the quality of traineeships abroad within Europe that are not covered by European programmes like Leonardo and Erasmus. They should at least fulfil a minimum standard of quality based on substantiated quality criteria. At the same time, it is important to assure that traineeships covered by the European programmes play a pioneering role as in the end they are funded by tax payer's money. 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. It is proven that a working and learning environment abroad requires more than only technical skills. It requires an environment to develop and They should provide a framework to gain skills and horizontal competencies, which will never be achieved in an educational environment only. For example: 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 media).

What should be the scope of such an initiative? (between 3 and 2000 characters)

As quality assurance is not without a cost, it is necessary to create incentives for companies and educational providers. Our proposal is to foster the establishment of structures that award (excellent quality of) implementation of traineeship programmes instead of trying to penalise poor quality. Awards could act as a flagship for companies by using them as an instrument to face the international competition (especially in sectors and regions which lack qualified personnel).

The initiative should focus on the definition of quality criteria for traineeships as well as on the funding and quality of intermediary organisations/ educational organisations, which could support and award companies that fulfil the required criteria.

What should be the form that such an initiative at EU level should take? (between 3 and 2000 characters)

On the one hand the initiative should set an independent uniform minimum standard for quality based on substantiated quality criteria. On the other hand it should provide an opportunity for companies to fulfil high-class quality standards.

The Europemobility Network contributes to raise the quality of mobility by establishing a European network of professionals, experts and mobility coordinators from different educational sectors. Within the Europemobility Network the Thematic Commission on quality, which is chaired by EVTA (European Vocational Training Association) and inter.research e.V.

(Institute of Interdisciplinary Research e.V.), currently develops a quality observatory and quality toolbox. Our recent research on different existing quality approaches revealed that a variety of quality tools and criteria has already been developed (to mention only a few: European quality charter for mobility/ for Erasmus/ for Leonardo da Vinci, quality criteria by Q-Planet, quality framework of EQAVET, etc.). But there is still a lack of availability and it is difficult to keep an overview of all existing approaches. The quality toolbox based on our observatory will categorize the variety of information and make them adaptable for different contexts and different educational sectors (higher education, vocational education, non formal and informal learning). Furthermore, it will specify indicators for measuring quality (quantitative as well as qualitative indicators).

Intermediary organisations/ educational organisations could function as a labelling institution. Instead of establishing new rules it seems to be more important to increase the transparency of actions that already exist within the structures of intermediary and educational organisations.

We plan to organise benchmarking groups (online benchmarking clubs) for educational and intermediary organisations in order to identify best practices regarding the management of mobility programmes and to develop and assure quality.

In your view are the elements of a high quality traineeship proposed in the attached Staff Working Document relevant? (between 3 and 2000 characters)

Yes, the elements mentioned are relevant, but they represent only the minimum standard. Traineeships abroad that are covered by European programmes (like Erasmus and Leonardo da Vinci) should play a pioneering role and fulfil a European quality standard beyond the minimum elements mentioned in the working document (which are already part of the “European Quality Charter for Mobility” and included in the “Quality Commitment for Erasmus student placements” and “Leonardo da Vinci – Partnership Quality Commitment Placements”).

What further elements would you suggest for consideration? (between 3 and 2000 characters)

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.

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? (between 3 and 2000 characters)

Consortia (networks of educational organisations and optionally chambers and intermediary organisations) can implement mobility projects more effectively and efficiently, especially for smaller educational institutions by pooling resources and sharing knowledge.

The consortia can offer support services like accompanying online-based intercultural and career trainings, which a single organisation could not afford.

For this reason, strengthening the consortia should be essential and supported by incentives for their organisation and management – that means the consortia should have the possibility to apply funds for additional work and support services.

Intermediary organisations and regional contact points of such consortia have close contacts to companies. They are best prepared to implement measures of awarding high quality traineeships at companies and they are in the best position to facilitate the communication between host organisations on one side and trainees and educational organisations on the other side.

The Study on a comprehensive overview on traineeship arrangements in Member States by the European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (May 2012) showed that there is still a lack of communication between the world of work and the world of education, which hinders young people from entering the labour market.

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