

YOUR WORK-PLACEMENT PROVIDER: EXPECTATIONS AND BEHAVIOUR (Trainee Guide)

ERMES

ENHANCING
RESOURCES FOR
MOBILITY
EXPERIENCES AND
STRATEGIES

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COUNTRIES CARDS

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1. Introduction

A work placement abroad is often the first step for those who would like to give an international dimension to their career. Many young people aspire discovering a different work environment and a different way of life. Combining the international dimension with a coherent work placement can certainly help to grow professionally and speaking a foreign language in this kind of environment is a good way to acquire more autonomy.

1.2. Why doing a work placement abroad?

The purpose of a work placement is to complete a vocational education and training itinerary, enhancing a diploma or degree and favouring:

- the acquisition of experience (professional abilities, working procedures and work organisation);
- practice and mastering the use of modern technologies (computers, multi-media instruments and machinery, etc.);
- the development of transversal competencies (self confidence, self-control, adaptability, flexibility, creativity, spirit of initiative, entrepreneurship mindset, accuracy, communication abilities, collaborating and directing, etc.);
- the development of intercultural awareness and the development of abilities to deal with cultural differences;
- the availability of continuous updating of knowledge and abilities.

The work placement primarily permits learners to discover the world of a company and helps them discern their own motivations more effectively. It permits them to get a more precise idea of the job they aspire to do and helps them develop and specify their own professional project.

Through work experience, the work placement allows learners to verify and complete the theoretical and methodological training they have received during their formal education. Thanks to contact with expert professionals, they assimilate ways of thinking and behaviour, which are precious for their professional inclusion.

A work placement abroad, in particular, helps learners to:

- understand the operation of a foreign company;
- master working methods that are different from their own country methods, procuring a wide array of professional outlets for themselves;
- perfect their command of one or more foreign languages;
- familiarise with the socio-cultural structures and mechanisms of other countries, developing the ability to understand the complexity and create a dialogue with other cultures and other people;
- prepare to travel and move to other countries.

1.3. The RECOMFOR Network

RECOMFOR is a European network set up to create a mobility area for learners in the field of trade. This network gathers training centres and companies from 10 different European countries. The aim is to enable learners moving abroad for a work placement to validate this experience once they are back in their country. Partners have worked on certification, training programme and learning outcomes assessment transparency in order to have good quality standards.

Your training centre is affiliated to this network and that's what enables you to participate in a RECOMFOR mobility.

1.4. Purpose of the Trainee Guide

The aim of this Trainee Guide is essentially threefold:

1. Firstly, to assist you to understand the various issues which might appear when planning and undertaking a work placement abroad and that you should consider carefully;
2. Secondly, to provide you with basic information on the country's rules, traditions, logistical matters, etc.. The information and advice are general and cannot be regarded as a substitute for the detailed advice and regulations from your home training centre and the host company.
3. Thirdly, to encourage you to enquire further and to consider other sources of information.

2. WHAT DO COMPANIES PREFER?

- Students who have not yet finished studying;
- Curriculum of studies or work experience with good evaluation;
- Average knowledge of the foreign language needed;
- For office work, information and technology skills;
- If possible, intercultural experience;
- If possible, commitment outside the course of studies (e.g. involvement in associations, field of sports, culture ... It reflects a positive image of a student's personality);
- Specific requirements that concern the work placement wished;
- The duration of the work placement varies and often depends on the training programme of each training centre.

3. HOW TO APPLY?

- Under advice of your teacher in the framework of a partnership between your training centre and companies¹;
- On-line Internet pages dedicated to work placement, through standards forms for candidates to fill out;
- Application by email and attachments (CV and letter of presentation);
- The CV must contain:
 - Personal information
 - Education
 - Working experience
 - Intercultural experience
 - Information Technology skills
 - Fields of interest
- The letter of presentation must contain:

Look at the European CV template
"EUROPASS"

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

Use it as such or inspire yourself of it

¹ You can find information on learning opportunities, training possibilities available throughout the European Union and job-matching services at <http://ec.europa.eu/ploteus> (Portal on Learning Opportunities throughout the European Space) and <http://ec.europa.eu/eures/> (The European Job Mobility Portal).

- Specific occupation or duties the candidate is applying for
- Candidate's motivation;
- Description of abilities, personal characteristics, knowledge, professional experience; stressing the ones that correspond to the requirements of the work placement;
- CV and letter of presentation have to be corrected by a mother tongue speaker;
- CV and letter of presentation have to be adapted according to the rules of the host country.

4. HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE COUNTRY YOU ARE GOING TO?

- Familiarise yourself with the customs and traditions of the country and find out about daily routine
- Find out costs of living; e.g food, accommodation, and travelling expenses.
- Getting information on healthcare, taxes, social protection and insurance is necessary to help you to adapt to your surroundings easily. Much of the necessary information that you will need can be found contacting directly your training centre or on the Internet.
- If you are going to a country where the language is different from your mother tongue, you should be able to speak English at a standard that will enable you to carry a basic conversation with those that you will be working with. Obviously, you will get much more out of the experience if you are able to communicate well with those that are working and living around you and you will be integrated much quicker into your surroundings and feel more settled. If your language skills are still inadequate, the remedy could be a language course before the work placement.

5. WHAT ARE THE MAIN WORKING CONDITIONS?

- Work Placement Agreement (the exact terms of the contract depend on the country, on the institutions involved and national laws applicable)
 - Signed before the work placement between learner, tutor company and training centre;
 - Establishing mutual rights and duties (duration and hours, causes for rescission, possible form of compensation, ...);
 - Specifying tasks to be performed;
 - May specify skills to obtain;
 - Indicating methods of supervision and guidance of a tutor in the work placement organisation and in the training centre
 - Including clauses respecting the norms envisioned in the host country (e.g. civil responsibility insurance).

- Training project:

Can be often required from the company by the training centre.

An adequate training project must contain realistic and achievable objectives during the course of the work placement and with the competences made available. The objectives have to be checked and eventually adapted several times during the work placement.

6. HOW TO CONFRONT WITH INTERCULTURAL DIFFERENCES?

- **Preparation:**
 - Evaluate all the pro's and con's from every angle
 - Consult family, friends, experts who have first-hand experience of what it means to move abroad
 - Keep the fear of departure under control with training on cultural adaptation in general and on specific aspects of the country of destination (history, culture, climate, demographic aspects, economy, educational and political systems, commercial practices and social customs)

- **Travel abroad: several steps:**
 - The honeymoon (initial enthusiasm): everything seems new and fascinating
 - Psychological adjustment: you start to perceive the differences in the mentality, feelings and behaviour, between the host country and the cultural standards acquired at home. This causes negative feelings.
 - Crisis of adaptation (cultural shock): sensations of anxiousness, insecurity and frustration towards the host culture, which provokes a permanent state of tension, complicates social relations and your performance at work. You feel homesick
 - Adaptation: the expatriate has understood the rules of the game in the host country and is fully able to apply them. There are three indicators to evaluate the level of success of the adaptation: subjective satisfaction with your living and working conditions the quality of social relations, level of achievement of professional objectives set.

- **Reintegration:**
 - Fear of going home
 - Enthusiasm for the return
 - Crisis of readjustment upon return
 - Readjustment

7. WHERE ARE YOU GOING TO SLEEP?

- Your training centre will help you to find a comfortable place to stay.
- Just remind that living costs vary greatly from country to country and city to city. In some instances, you will find that certain things are a lot cheaper while others are a lot more expensive. Talk to anyone who has worked or lived abroad and they will tell you that it is very important to do thorough research into the costs of living and have a realistic budget.

8. HOW TO FINANCE YOUR WORK PLACEMENT?

- Scholarships are very variable and depend on each country and each training centre
- In many work placements, you will not get paid for the work you do. Often the placement may be a voluntary placement and you must remember that being paid a salary is not the point of getting work experience, especially abroad;
- Several EU-funded programmes supporting mobility can assist in financing the work placement abroad. In order to receive detailed information you should contact your training centre or more general information is also available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/>

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