

Report on the development project in accordance with the application text
Write on the following points:

1. Overall objectives:

The goals set for the project were met as planned. With three planning meetings, the Development Project group could proceed with planning the project further and decide on the guidelines on the process of international placements. A questionnaire for companies and students was prepared, and the survey was carried out in partner universities, also student and company representatives were invited to participate in the process. The results from the surveys and questionnaires were presented and the practical procedure was conceived and introduced to student and company representatives to acquire feedback and input. The feedback provided through the questionnaires and surveys indicated a positive response to the ideas behind the project.

A list of companies potentially interested in offering internship to students was prepared by the network. Students have been involved in the process by inviting them to participate in meetings as well as through surveys and questionnaires. The different processes concerning internship were shared among the partners in order to try to identify common denominators and potential common objectives for the participating institutions.

A proposal/marketing package, in the form of a flyer, was created for the business partners and students explaining the international placement benefits and the overall procedure. The same information can be found on our website.

During the second meeting it was agreed that the network should build a database of companies that would offer internship to students, but after serious considerations and discussions during the third meeting the idea was dismissed as the implementation cost would be too high and the potential benefits to both companies and students too low. The reasons for this argumentation are the fact that there are a wide variety of well-established digital platforms across the Nordic and Baltic countries that offer companies and potential employees with the main features we wished in our platform and that companies do not have the interest in assigning extra resources to the maintenance of additional platforms.

This situation led to the realisation that one of the biggest concerns companies in the region express when dealing with international internships is that they either have no experience with international employees, are worried about the international interns' communication capabilities and skills, or do not know about the possibility.

In order to address the above mentioned issues it was agreed that it would be a reasonable idea to give interested companies and students the possibility of experiencing an international internship situation for a limited time and with little cost involved. The main idea is to break the barriers that the companies have set into place due to lack of experience, and to demonstrate that the companies can actually benefit greatly from having international interns in their organisation. This will also allow the students to experience working environments that may not be available to them in their own countries, as well as to develop intercultural and communication skills.

2. Activities and collaboration:

The model the network decided to use is based on an intensive internship program where students from the participating institutions get together in a specific location and are assigned as interns to a company. The students will gain direct access to the company's resources and, whenever possible will be hosted at the company's facilities. Local teachers and staff will support the students during their intensive internship period. The length of the internship project is planned to be between 2 and 3 weeks, with the students working an average of 37 hours per week in projects assigned to them by the companies.

In the interest of testing the idea and further develop it, it was decided to run a "light" version of the intensive internship during the month of May 2017 in Vilnius, Lithuania. This version will run for one week with the attendance of one student from each participating institution, 2 teachers from the network, local staff, and 2 interested companies. The detailed program for this week will be developed in close collaboration with the hosting companies.

It was also decided that a pilot project of one week would be organised to learn how this kind of multicultural experiment, which has not been implemented before, would function and how it would benefit the students, companies and also the schools. With the help of received feedback the project could then be develop in the right direction. Due to the timetables of both students and staff, it became apparent that the optimal time to arrange this project would be late spring.

The pilot took place in Vilnius from the 8th to the 12th of May, 2017, with the participation of students from Denmark, Lithuania, Estonia, Iceland, Finland and Sweden and the engagement of 4 local companies which offered 5 projects.

The participating companies were all small companies and their aim was to further develop their business in the Baltic states and Scandinavia. The companies were:

ConCreate - Concrete solutions for prefabricated housing
Posi Studio - Web blog and design agency
Pixelete - Design and web development agency
Dublis - Fine dining and art gallery

The students were placed in international groups and assigned to a company to work with for the duration of the week. The tasks were all unique and related to various fields of marketing. The groups were built by the network representatives based on the students' results from personality tests and nationality.

Each group had members from different countries and backgrounds/level of experience, as well as various study fields within Business. The groups worked, in general terms, in very close collaboration with the assigned company and were offered supervision by the participating teaching staff when needed.

During the first day the companies' representatives presented their cases to their assigned group of students and set the terms of communication and collaboration for the remaining days of the project. At different times during the week, the students visited their assigned companies and met with their representatives to either gather information or discuss strategies.

An element of this pilot included, of course, social activities that aimed at international networking and team building across borders. The companies participated in some of the social activities.

At the end of the week the students presented their project findings to the companies, teachers and their peers.

3. Results and outcomes:

The network participants met in Västerås in October 2016 to discuss the progress of the project and agree on its future.

The results from the survey performed by the partners were discussed, and that data indicated that the path originally set was not attainable. Therefore the network decided to allocate part of the funding to secure the successful implementation of the pilot project.

As stated earlier, the pilot project took place in Vilnius between the 8th and the 12th of May 2017. 18 students, 5 teachers and 4 companies took part in the pilot.

At the end of the week the students and companies were asked to evaluate the pilot project, providing the following results:

Participating companies were satisfied with the job performed by the students and the possible solutions to their specific problems developed by their assigned groups.

In three of the projects the companies decided to further develop and implement the students' ideas after the completion, and one of the companies offered a job to one of the participating students.

All of the students were satisfied with the pilot project and would recommend it to their peers. Detailed information can be found at <https://admin.typeform.com/form/3675494/analyze/#/section/reports>

4. Impact and dissemination:

The obvious impact of this project has been the international working experience provided to the participating students, institutions and companies.

By having collaborated with small companies, the project has demonstrated that there is room for international staff and activities even at such a small scale and introductory level. The benefit for the participating companies can be seen in their willingness to utilise the students' findings and ideas in their future endeavours.

The network is today working in further develop this pilot idea to better serve the different needs of partner institutions and to increase the number of participating students and companies, as well as extend the duration of the experience.