



## ASEM Work Placement Pilot Programme 2<sup>nd</sup> Expert Meeting Ghent University, 24 and 25 September 2015

### MEETING MINUTES

#### INTRODUCTION

by Noël Vercruyssen, Belgium (Flanders) Ministry for Education and Training.

Welcome and brief outline of the history of the pilot programme. Some substantial efforts will have to be made to implement the programme. Although a pilot programme involves some 'learning by doing'; the quality, relevance and attraction of the programme should at all times be our concern.

The meeting of the 5 countries volunteering in the pilot project aims to consider how to proceed further, to make the pilot programme a success. The meeting agrees on procedures and guidelines; bridging a number of practical obstacles and differences, as regulations and policies may differ in the participating countries.

Internships and UBN are gaining importance in the field of Higher Education; even so in Flanders. Brief introduction of the Flemish educational system.

- **Rotating coordination:**

The Belgian proposal to adopt a rotating coordination instead of one coordinating country for the whole pilot project, is fully supported by the meeting. Belgium will take up the coordinating role for the academic year 2015-2016. Role of the coordinator is monitoring and facilitating project progress. The ASEM secretariat in Jakarta will be informed and involved.

- **Terminology:**

For a good understanding the meeting decides to use the terms '*intern*' and '*internship*' or 'work placement' or 'work based learning', instead of 'traineeship'. The latter is systematically used in European context since the start of the Erasmus+ Programme; e.g. in Germany: 'traineeship' is a learning period after you have graduated and you start working in a company. From the Asian side 'traineeship' is usually associated with vocational and technical training.

## COUNTRY PROGRESS

- Thailand:  
(presentation by Ms Chadarat Singhadechakul (ppt. in annex))  
Coordinating body for Thailand is OHEC. Thai delegation is in favor of 'platform' formed by coordinating bodies, one for each country. First interns will be sent out in 1<sup>st</sup> semester 2016; 10 outgoing and 10 incoming students. Study fields involved in a first phase: Pharmaceutical Sciences, Business Administration, Agro-Industry, Hospitality & Tourism Management. Several HEI's are involved. The Thai delegation emphasizes the importance of matching candidates and companies as well as finding suitable mentors. Thailand proposes the TOEIC test for Thai students instead of TOEFL. The English proficiency for survival is considered sufficient.
  
- Germany:  
(Martina Link)  
Karlsruhe University of Applied Sciences (Career Centre) is involved in the pilot project. The estimated necessary staff support (1/4 full time equivalent) agreed on at the Bangkok meeting (January 2015) for the programme implementation, will be in place starting January 2016. Thus it will be difficult to implement already in 2015. Travel allowances will be given to students participating in the pilot project. List of companies offering internships is available. Due to language problems not all companies are ready to accept interns from abroad. Sound knowledge of German is often required. Nevertheless companies willing to host Asian interns will be searched for actively.  
Will be checked out whether the Aschaffenburg University of Applied Sciences is still participating in the pilot project too.
  
- Flanders:  
(Patricia Bursens)  
Ghent University is involved in the pilot project. A call will be launched shortly to all students (except first year students) for outgoing internship in the second semester. Four students will be selected. Priority will be given to students with credited internship. The final candidates will receive financial support from the department of education and training, to cover expenses for travelling and accommodation. The first interns should start in the second semester of 2015-2016 (February 2016). As soon as the profiles from the incoming interns will be received, companies will be actively searched. Good knowledge of English is essential, for mentor and interns.
  
- Indonesia:  
(dr. Illah Sailah)  
will be involved: students in the field of agriculture, tourism, manufacturing (=engineering) and hospitality & tourism sector: both receiving and sending. UI and ITB / hospitality and tourism/ offer one course for student /5 days in industry and 1 day at university. Master degrees do not have mandatory internship programmes; only outgoing interns on bachelor level.
  
- Brunei: will be asked by Belgium to send in their country progress / state of the art.

## ASEM Work Placement Pilot Project as a QUALITY LABEL?

Introduction by Patricia Burssens (Ghent University) (ppt. in annex).

If we want the ASEM WP to develop as a quality label for internships for interns and companies, a qualitative approach with transparent quality standards / quality guarantees should be taken into account. Qualitative internship experience implies a coherence of different elements, shared responsibilities and different actors with different roles before, during and even after the traineeship. The preparatory period -before the internship is taking place- seems very important. In this stage a number of aspects should be well taken care of, because determining the successful start of the internship.

Some issues have a greater impact on the quality of the internship experience than others, as identified by H.J Hobbes' research on the quality of international internships at a number of Dutch Higher Education Institutions (*'De kwaliteit van Internationale Stages'*, Nuffic 2009):

- students need support for finding an international internship
- importance of preparation; administrative but also intercultural
- language problems have a negative impact on communication with mentor and put a mortgage on acculturation
- problem detection: importance of targeted monitoring at start-up phase of the internship.

Based on H.J. Hobbes' research Patricia Burssens (Ghent University) developed a matrix (in annex), offering an overview of aspects accompanying internship organisation. A panel of experts adapted the matrix (on the occasion of the final meeting of the European RECONFIRM project) and co-identified critical factors for success.

Key words are: information & communication, transparency (procedures / credit recognition), 'right man on the right place': management of expectations, (administrative) standardization, 'custom made' problem solving, solid engagement of all actors.

The meeting is invited to overlook the matrix and to add possible complementary elements.

The matrix is vertically divided in three main parts referring to the period (before, during, after the internship), summarizing horizontally the roles of the three main parties involved; the intern, the sending institution (HEI), the receiving organization (company). In the ASEM case a 4<sup>th</sup> role may be allocated to the coordinating body in each country.

Germany: Q Planet quality standards are put forward. Importance of sufficient resources, infrastructure, remuneration, expected outcomes, standards for acknowledgements.

The input of the meeting will be integrated into the matrix; to be used as a practical guideline for the development of the project.

### *Selection of candidates*

All agree that each country / participating institution determines its own selection criteria / selection format for outgoing interns.

A common ASEM application template will be developed (Belgium) for selection of candidates;

The motivation letter (max. 1 page) should comprise the following elements

- o why the chosen country
- o what kind of internship / company are you looking for
- o aimed internship period
- o mandatory internship or not / possible credits to be earned

- skills / social skills / competences to be gained
- former practical experience relevant for the desired internship
- language knowledge (English)
- cv / résumé

Selection criteria should match with requirements put forward by receiving countries / receiving companies. Selection criteria for outgoing and incoming interns should for each country included in the website. It is preferable not to develop one common (ASEM) application form for companies; they are not used to forms, this may throw up unnecessary thresholds.

Thailand: university does matching; companies release internship and job description; students can apply and university and company do the final matching. List of companies in Thailand willing to accept a Belgian / German interns, will be communicated to Belgium and Germany.

Flanders: final selection is done by receiving company, not by the university.

#### *Language requirements*

The language requirements for outgoing interns are not to be put forward by the pilot project. The meeting concludes that it is up to the receiving companies to determine the required language level, according to the needs / kind of work placement. The company mentors should be able to communicate (in English) with interns and sending organizations.

**Training agreement:** was developed during Bangkok meeting. The meeting agrees that it is not necessary to have the ASEM secretariat to sign the agreement too.

#### *Matching of interns & companies*

How to facilitate applications and the matching of candidates & companies?

Each participating country will identify the national coordinating body/the national University-Business-Network (UBN, as referred to in the letter of intent) and will inform the ASEM Education secretariat and the fellow participating countries.

The national coordinating body/UBN plays a central role in the implementation of the pilot project and a facilitating role between the intern (incoming and outgoing), the sending university, the receiving organization/company and if it is the case the 'receiving university'.

In the framework of targeted matching of interns and companies, the meeting agrees on the necessity of identifying the discipline / field of interest of the selected interns on the one hand, and a list of companies willing to take part in the project on the other hand.

All agree on the importance of matching ('right man on the right place'). Skype interview of company with candidate preceding acceptance by the company is recommended as standard step in the final selection process, in the view of matching expectations of intern and company.

Internship in (participating) universities is in some countries restricted as the idea is to expand UBN network.

#### *Intercultural preparation*

Outgoing interns will be prepared by the sending countries; intercultural awareness / intercultural training. Receiving organizations can support acculturation by introducing the intern in the local culture. The receiving organization must brief the intern about the local working culture (rules of conduct).

Thailand: min. 30h of intercultural preparation integrated in each study programme.

Germany: intercultural preparation is offered.

Indonesia: outgoing interns: credits can be earned for intercultural preparation. For incoming interns: local culture can be very different on the different isles.

Belgium: intercultural preparation not yet compulsory but policy may change. The pilot project may function as leverage to structural intercultural preparation as part of internationalization experience.

On country websites: links to be included to help incoming find cultural information on the host country.

### *Practicalities*

Some practicalities involve different approaches and regulations in the participating countries:

- **Visa matters:**

Thailand: visa only for 90 days, extension is only possible afterwards; cannot be guaranteed but chances seriously enhanced if contract runs via coordinating body or university. From this viewpoint coordinating agency is necessary in country necessary.

Germany:

'exemption' of work permit is needed. Students enrolled in home university, when German university is not involved, visa is possible until 6 months or even 12 (max. ASEM WP is 6 months). Exemption of work permit is to be signed by German labor office; certificate of enrolment is needed.

Belgium & Brunei: information not yet available

Indonesia: Government of Indonesia wants to know who is in Indonesia for security reasons; so this information needs to be given to the government and this takes time. Further information not yet available.

For each country list of documents needed and timeline for visa application should be mentioned on the country webpage; or at least links where more information can be found.

To facilitate visa application: the coordinating bodies / universities or HEI's involved can confirm formally that the student will do an internship in the framework of the ASEM WP programme.

- **Financial support** from companies:

Thailand:

interns receive 300 USD / month via coordinating agency. It is expected that outgoing Thai interns receive also financial compensations from the receiving organisations/companies). This element should be included in the communication with companies.

Germany:

in case of non-mandatory internships, companies are bound to pay minimum wages. In case of mandatory internships in educational framework, remuneration non obligatory.

Belgium:

in case of internship in educational framework (i.e. HEI signing training agreement; remuneration non mandatory. In case of non-educational framework (i.e. no educational institution signing the agreement, but training agreement via other accredited bodies) remuneration is obligatory (approx. 750 Euro / month) to counter intentions of abuse of interns.

Indonesia: ?

- **Insurance**. Travel insurance is important. Interns are strongly advised to take a civil liability insurance. Country information on insurance matters to be added on the website.

- **Booking tickets** and other administration: students have to look after this by themselves.

- **Accommodation:** companies should be stimulated to help the intern with finding accommodation. The coordinating body is responsible for facilitating and supporting, but not for providing accommodation as such.
- **Academic responsibility** for the internship  
The meeting agrees that academic responsibility remains in the sending institution. There is no host institution as such -even if HEI's are involved in the pilot project- only a host company. HEI can take up this role if they prefer to do so.

## DISSEMINATION

Dissemination is important for the expansion of the ASEM WP programme.

ASEM interns will be asked to write a short report (min. 1- max. 2 pages) at the end of their internship experience.

The report includes the following topics:

- some data about the internship; where, period, which company, etc.
- practical and organizational aspects of the internship
- professional aspects of the internship
- cultural aspects of the internship
- what did the international internship mean for you on a personal level
- what would you recommend to new candidates?

The report is to be sent to the local ASEM contacts. It will give the coordinating bodies a view on the experienced internships and may also be helpful for ASEM evaluation of the internship. The reports can also be used for sharing experience with peers. The interns are to be asked beforehand if they agree with making the content public e.g. (testimonials) on the ASEM website.

A proposal for template will be developed by Belgium.

In the future interns may be asked to share their experience in a different or complementary way e.g. by keeping a blog (might be exercise in professional communication for interns).

## WEBSITE

The website is the appropriate information tool for interested interns, companies, HEI's, coordinating bodies and other stakeholders. Also promotion tool.

Timing: should be operational asap, ideally by November 1<sup>st</sup>

Belgium will ask the ASEM secretariat to develop a webpage for the ASEM WP Pilot Project based on the Letter of intent signed in Riga, 26 April 2015. Also for the original proposal for a pilot scheme as it has been approved by the Ministers for Education in Malaysia in May 2013.

Website content:

- **The ASEM WP Pilot Project website** has to include the following information:
  - general information concerning the ASEM WP pilot project; to be linked to on ASEM Education website (= one level higher)
  - short text referring to the LOI signed in April 2015.
  - links to the national coordinating body / UBN

- links to the five countries involved.

Each participating country will develop its own ASEM WP country webpage, each to be linked to the general ASEM WP page, by the ASEM secretariat.

- **Country webpages have to include the next main topics:**

**Guidelines for outgoing interns:**

- The areas involved (+ possible restrictions) / institutions involved
- Internal selection procedure & deadlines; eligibility requirements, language requirements (taking into account that the final language requirements will be determined by the receiving company).
- ASEM application form
- Administrative, logistical and practical matters:
  - visa information; application timing, fees, documents required / links to embassies
  - required steps / required documents
  - insurances: health – third party liability – etc.
- Contacts

**Guidelines for incoming interns**

- The areas involved and possible restrictions
- Selection procedure (+ deadlines) and criteria; the final language requirements will be determined by the receiving company).
- Links to national companies involved (for inbound mobility)
- Links to intercultural information concerning the host country (living in .... ; practical information)
- Contacts

**Guidelines for companies:**

- Study areas involved / countries involved
- Procedures
- Contacts
- Recommendations for a successful internship experience

**PROMOTION OF ASEM WP PILOT PROJECT TOWARDS COMPANIES.**

How to promote the project to companies? What is to gain for them? How can we convince them?

Selling points:

- Improvement of the trade relations with another country by bringing in interns from the country concerned.
- Work placement can also be part as a recruiting tool for the enterprises. (In Belgium not allowed to promote internships as recruiting tool).
- Young interns may bring in new ideas.
- Engaging internationals; gives the company an up-to-date corporate image
- Tax reduction; in some countries e.g. Thailand.

- Interns may strengthen the company's competitive position and bring in 'new blood' into the company. In the framework of globalization, European companies nowadays tend to look more eastwards; may be interesting moment to engage a Asian intern
- An intern can help you to realize promising ideas that have waiting for a while for implementation; an internship delivers extra hands and brains to your team (team work being an interesting context for interns to learn form)
- It is a way to get acquainted with other cultures: opportunities for internationalisation @ home. It gives staff members opportunities to exercise their knowledge of English.
- Longer internships (> ' to 6 months) are more interesting for companies than short ones; better return on investment / allows project work.

#### **Direct contacts with companies:**

Universities involved in business networks; direct contact may still useful to acquaint companies with the ASM WP pilot project. Coordinating bodies may help to establish direct contacts and to solve problems.

Belgium will draft a list of minimum tasks and responsibilities of the national UBN (terms of reference of the coordination body/UBN).

#### **PROMOTION OF ASEM WP PILOT PROJECT TOWARDS STUDENTS**

How do we convince students to participate?

Explore the world! Worthy professional experience, gain intercultural skills. Give your cv a boost, it enhances your chances on the labor market. Prepare your career; work placement as a stepping stone. More return on investment when well prepared and insight in own competences; strengths and developing points; insight in what there is to learn in the work placement.

#### **CONCLUSION + TIMELINE**

The meeting brought about overall consensus on the importance of quality standards and a number of operational issues. Development of the ASEM WP website and country websites are to be given priority in the framework of launching the programme and promotion towards companies.

1. Development of ASEM website:  
The ASEM secretariat will be asked to develop a webpage for the ASEM Work Placement Pilot Project, based on the Letter of intent signed in Riga , 26 April 2015 and the original proposal for a pilot scheme, as it has been approved by the Ministers for Education in Malaysia in May 2013
2. The ASEM Education website will establish a link to the national coordinating body/UBN.  
Each participating country will identify the national coordinating body/the national University-Business-Network (UBN, as referred to in the letter of intent) and will inform the ASEM Education secretariat and the fellow participating countries.
3. The national coordinating body/UBN plays a central role in the implementation of the pilot project and a facilitating role between the intern (incoming and outgoing), the sending university, the receiving organization/company and if it is the case the 'receiving university'.  
Belgium will draft a list of minimum tasks and responsibilities of the national UBN (terms of reference of the coordination body/UBN).



4. Each participating country will develop its own ASEM work placement webpage providing all relevant information and guidelines for outgoing interns, incoming interns, companies. this webpage is to be linked to the ASEM Work Placement website, by the ASEM secretariat.
5. Belgium will revise the matrix that has been presented during the meeting integrating the meeting's input. The revised matrix will be used as a guideline for the further implementation of the pilot project. Guidelines and recommendations may be refined in the course of the pilot project.
6. Belgium will develop a template for application and for final report for interns.
7. Belgium will take the responsibility for coordinating the project between today and the next meeting, as well as for monitoring project progress.
8. Belgium will ask Brunei to send in their country progress / state of the art (to be sent to Belgium).

#### *Timeline*

Sending draft of meeting minutes by half of October; remarks to be sent to Belgium (Patricia.Burssens@ugent.be).  
Website: general ASEM WP Pilot Project website should be operational by 1<sup>st</sup> of November 2015; to be further completed gradually.

The next meeting will be held in Indonesia, May 2016.

In case of problems or matters to discuss a skype meeting can be arranged.

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