

Fresh Graduates and Unemployed Can Acquire Working Experience through Trainee Programmes

In September 2012, the unemployment rate increased to 8.4% in the Czech Republic (almost half a million persons are registered at the Labour Offices). Nevertheless, many employers find it difficult to recruit skilled workers. Currently, it is the mention of internships and their length what the companies most frequently expect to find in the CVs of the fresh graduates. High school graduates, therefore, are often not even concerned about the fact whether the internship is paid or not.

A new project called **Internships in Companies – Education through Practice** – brings a chance for change – not exclusive to the high school students.

The two-year project has been launched by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in co-operation with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in June 2012. The project is co-financed from the European Social Fund (ESF) and implemented by the Continuing Education Fund (*Fond dalšího vzdělávání* – FDV).

Internships in companies aim at helping both the fresh graduates who fail to find employment due to lack of professional practice as well as other disadvantaged groups in the labour market, such as long-term unemployed or persons returning to the labour market – e.g. women after maternity leave. The internships are, however, suitable also for companies failing to find an adequate candidate for a specific position. The trainee programmes will enable them to train and educate employees in line with their own needs. The trainees are given opportunity to restore their working habits and get accustomed to work procedures again, get an update in fields undergoing fast technological development during their absence, etc.

Particular internships last between one to six months. Internships providers are paid the fixed costs for placements. On average, three-month internship costs amount to CZK 60 - 120 thousand / approx. EUR 2,400 – 4,800. The companies must be able to provide a mentor for the trainee or trainees and create conditions for the implementation of internship on the basis of the contract with the FDV and trainee.

Trainees are not entitled to wages; they receive only contribution for food and travel expenses, in exceptional cases also for accommodation. In addition to new knowledge and professional experience, the internship shall increase their competitiveness in the labour market; it also provides them with possibility to get employed by the company in which the internship is performed. Upon completion of an internship, the trainee receives a certificate recording the acquired professional skills.

In case a person registered with the Labour Office and receiving unemployment benefits becomes a trainee, participation in internship does not terminate their right to unemployment benefits. Therefore the project might become a really interesting opportunity for the unemployed. Offer of the positions is based on current skill needs of the employers and they represent both managerial and administrative positions as well as craft positions. Within the project, for individual typical positions there are so-called internship templates developed specifying framework content, requirements for trainees as well as providers of the internship and calculation of costs covered by the project. In the course of September 2012, there have been 28 templates launched in selected fields (IT, management, construction, economics, etc.) their number will continue to increase until reaching the target of 150.

The registration of applicants as well as providers has begun in mid-September and by the end of the first month there were almost 270 registered applicants from among employers and more than 1,200 applicants for internship.

In total, there will be 5,000 participants trained within the project.

The main objective of this project is to establish trainee programmes as universal tool for gaining professional skills in particular field and also to link education with practice as an important part of continuing education.

The project should help to anchor continuing education in form of internships in Czech legislation. Business entities, involved in this project, get a unique opportunity to train and educate their future specialists in the field in which they operate and subsequently to employ these skilled workers.

Source: www.stazevefirmach.cz