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Case Study

Achieving high quality, hands-on professional training for IT students

Presented by: ICT Association of Hungary

Industry: Information, Communication & Technology

Location: Budapest, Hungary

Size: <50 employees

Challenges:

- Universities' high drop-out rates among IT students
- Attractivity of market entry job offers leading to discontinuity of studies
- Universities' lack of institutional knowledge on the latest/most sought after technologies
- Companies' senior employees have limited mentoring skills

Solution:

The **ICT Association of Hungary** is part of the national project [“Code your future!”](#) (GINOP-3.1.1-VEKOP-15-2016-00001), supported by the European Social Funds. The association was tasked to conceptualise and design **an internship programme (and service) for IT students**, based on desk research findings and in-depth analysis of ICT companies' needs and internship practices.

Internship programmes are not new, but the ICT Association of Hungary brought on the table innovative elements that facilitate the **talent selection and hiring of interns** for companies and ensure that **students can receive high quality, hands-on professional training**.

Instead of working with employment agencies, they turned to **student career counselling centres (SCCC)** who have direct means of communication with the potential interns and apply advantageous tax solutions for companies to hire them. The **internships are paid by the project** and covers about three months of



internship at the selected companies which removes companies' roadblocks and offers financial stability to the working students.

With this programme, a student can benefit from a maximum of **500 hours of internship at one or up to three companies**. Companies can hire interns for **20h/week when classes are held**, but this can go up to **40h/week during any other period** — a model that protects the quality of the students' learning experiences and increases its practical relevance.

The programme is run operationally by a SCCC, operating via public procurement. Internship positions are curated, students' skills pre-assessed for optimal matchmaking, and positions filled. The programme also includes the **“development of mentors' competences” — a 16-hour training for company mentors** to build their capacity on relevant aspects like task delegation, internship programme building, monitoring and evaluation.

Results:

The internship programme strengthens cooperation between universities and ICT companies. It results in lower drop-out rates and immediately services the labour market with a capable workforce. Over two years, **230 ICT companies** benefitted from it and **760 IT students found a paid internship** opportunity.

Results from the second year of the programme show that out of the 260 students serviced this year, **150 of them have received longer-term, part-time offers from companies** under favourable conditions which allow them to continue and finalise their studies.

Key benefits:

- Real-world, hands-on experience for IT students that doesn't jeopardise their university learning experience
- Companies can easily hire interns at (almost) no cost
- Better retention rates at universities
- Replicable and adaptable to different Member States, using the European Social Funds or national funds

Key resources:

- Mentors' time and availability
- Availability of funding

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