

Organising traineeship mobilities across partner institutions

Key things to consider

Organising traineeships across partner institutions requires flexibility, as approaches differ significantly between institutions. While some partners operate through highly centralised systems, others rely mainly on faculties or departments. Understanding these differences early can help streamline communication, clarify responsibilities, and improve the student experience.

1. Terminology and definitions

Terminology related to work placements can differ considerably between institutions and programmes :

- Some institutions use the term “internship”, while others prefer “traineeship”.
- In Erasmus+ contexts, “traineeship” is often the preferred terminology.
- Certain institutions distinguish between curricular and extracurricular placements, while others use broader umbrella terms.
- Definitions may also vary depending on national legislation, employment status, or academic requirements.

Clarifying terminology early is important to avoid misunderstandings regarding eligibility, expectations, documentation, and funding.

2. Centralised vs Faculty-based organisation

One of the biggest differences between partners is how traineeships are managed:

- **Centralised models:** Some institutions manage traineeships mainly through a central careers office, international office, or Erasmus unit. These offices handle applications, payments, mobility processes, information sessions, and general student support.
- **Faculty-led models:** Other institutions leave most responsibilities to faculties, schools, or departments. In these cases, internship coordinators or academic staff manage placements directly. However, it is important to point out that not all faculties benefit from the same staff resources, nor are they all equally autonomous.
- **Hybrid systems:** Several institutions combine both approaches. Central services manage mobility administration and grants, while faculties validate academic content and supervise placements.

This means that the correct contact person may vary greatly from one institution to another.

3. National vs International traineeships

Many institutions distinguish between national and international traineeships:

- International traineeships are often coordinated centrally because they involve Erasmus+ processes, grants, visas, insurance, and mobility reporting.
- National traineeships are more commonly managed locally by departments or faculties.
- Some institutions only provide structured support for international mobility, while domestic internships follow separate procedures.

Partners may therefore have completely different workflows depending on whether the traineeship is international or domestic.

4. Incoming vs Outgoing students

Support structures also differ depending on whether students are outgoing or incoming:

- Outgoing students often receive support related to applications, grants, CV preparation, and mobility documentation.
- Incoming trainees are frequently supported directly by the host department, supervisor, or local administrative staff.
- In several institutions, incoming support is less formalised and depends heavily on the hosting faculty.

This can affect onboarding, communication speed, and the consistency of information provided to trainees.

5. Promotion of traineeship opportunities

Institutions promote traineeships in different ways:

- Some use central internship platforms or career portals.
- Others rely entirely on faculties and departments to advertise opportunities.
- Promotion channels may include internal intranets, Erasmus calls, faculty mailing lists, career services, or dedicated internship websites.
- In some cases, public institutions face restrictions on advertising placements directly due to competition rules.

As a result, visibility of opportunities can vary significantly between partners.

6. Student support and guidance

The level of student support also differs considerably:

- Some institutions offer strong career support, including CV reviews, application guidance, and internship preparation.
- Others expect students to independently secure and organise their placements.
- Certain academic fields, especially those with mandatory internships, often provide more structured support than others.

It is therefore important to clarify expectations for student autonomy and available support services.

Check out CHARM-EU's tool for intercultural preparation here (add link).

7. Status of PhD Candidates

Another important difference concerns how institutions classify PhD candidates:

- In some institutions, PhD candidates are considered primarily as students.
- In others, they may be treated as staff members or employees.
- This classification can affect eligibility for Erasmus+ mobility schemes, access to trainee support services, insurance coverage, administrative processes, and funding opportunities.
- As a result, PhD candidates may not always benefit from the same support structures as undergraduate or master's students.

It is therefore important to clarify the institutional status of PhD participants early in the process.

8. Administrative and practical considerations

Several operational aspects should be checked early when working with partners:

- Insurance requirements and liability coverage
- Erasmus+ documentation and grant procedures
- Visa or residency support for international trainees
- Approval and validation processes
- Communication responsibilities between central offices and faculties
- Availability of dedicated internship coordinators

Clear coordination between academic and administrative stakeholders is essential to avoid delays and confusion.

There is no single model for organising traineeships across partner institutions. Systems may be centralised, faculty-led, or hybrid, and responsibilities often differ between national and international mobility, as well as incoming and outgoing students. Early clarification of roles, processes, and support structures is essential for smooth cooperation and a positive traineeship experience for students.