Guide to a group interview
with students of vocational schools who participated
in internships and traineeships abroad

Tracer study on the careers of former participants of learning mobility in the vocational education and training sector financed from the European funds (LLP LdV / Erasmus +)

I. Introduction (approx. 5 min)

The following section is used to provide basic information on the circumstances of the interview (study goals, information about the moderator, length of the interview, ensuring anonymity, interview recording). This introduction is also aimed at initiating a conversation and providing conditions for effective obtaining of expected information.

An example of the possible introduction:

My name is ……. I represent the Foundation for the Development of the Education System - an institution that has provided funds for the implementation of the project in which you participated. We are currently conducting a study on career tracking of transnational mobility programmes participants. I would like to talk to you about your transnational mobility experience, and the skills you have gained as well as your assessment of their usefulness in further professional and private life. I would also like to introduce you to a few general rules of our meeting:

- We all have the right to speak and participate in a joint discussion.
- Each of us can also ask questions, both to the person conducting the interview and to one another.
- Every statement is important and valuable.
- We do not have to be unanimous and each of you can maintain your own views.
- Please speak one at a time, as we will be recording.

It is necessary to record our meeting, as it is not possible to write down your statements during the conversation (it would unnecessarily extend the time of our meeting). However, I would like to assure you that the recording will not be made public. I will not share any of your personal data with the Foundation, your teachers or other persons.

II. Information about participants (approx. 10 min)

The following section is used to provide basic Information about the participants.

As your group is composed of individuals from different classes and years, and some of you have already graduated (NOTE: *this applies to the situation when former interns are also present in the group*), at the beginning I would like each of you to say a few words about yourself. In a moment I will hand out pieces of paper. I would like each of you to write your name or nickname (the one we are to address you with). On the other side of the paper please write two words, which in your opinion best define your attributes: one regarding your character, the other one regarding your professional skills.

The moderator distributes paper and pens to the participants.

If everyone has already signed their cards, now I would ask each of you to read your name and introduce yourself using the two chosen attributes.

For each participant the moderator asks the reasons for choosing each of the attributes, especially paying attention to professional qualities so that the conversation can smoothly progress to the experiences related to the internship/traineeship period, asking each person the following questions:

1. How should we address you?
2. Which attributes have you chosen? Justify your choice (especially ask about professional skills).
3. Do you already know who you would like to be in the future? (especially ask if participants want to stay in the occupation they are studying for)

III. Motivation to participate in mobility (approx. 15 min)

The following section pertains to the motivations behind participation in transnational mobility, with special regard to the circumstances of the decision to participate in the project.

4. What was the reason for undertaking transnational mobility? Whose decision was it?
5. Did the whole class go abroad or just some of the students? What factors determined this?
6. Did you know that the school offers you an opportunity to participate in transnational mobility when you were choosing an upper secondary school (upon graduation from the lower secondary school)? Did it matter to you?
7. Did you talk to other colleagues who had already participated in an internship/traineeship abroad? Did you speak about their experience? What did they say? Have these opinions been confirmed?

IV. Period of transnational mobility (approx. 20 min)

The part below concerns the experience of the internship/traineeship, and description of the host company's practices.

I would now like to talk about your internship/traineeship abroad. It is important that each and every one of you has the opportunity to share your experiences and opinions with me. Remember that your opinions may differ, as each of you may had a completely different experience.

8. Where was the learning mobility organised? (in a company; at school; practical training institution; elsewhere)?
9. How long did your transnational mobility last? Do you think its duration was adequate?
10. What did you do during your internship/traineeship abroad? What were your tasks? How do you rate their usefulness? Did the host company have a special training programme prepared for you? How were you involved in the day to day work?
11. Who went with you as a tutor on the part of the school? What was your tutor's role during the trip? (e.g. did they attend the classes with you /assist in communication / facilitate arranging matters while abroad / help solving problems)?
12. How do you rate the conditions of your stay while abroad? Was the company/host institution/your school interested in them and did they offer you any help?
13. How do you rate the workshop facilities during internships/traineeship abroad compared to the ones in Poland?
14. Was there someone who introduced you to the internship/traineeship structure upon arrival? Was this helpful? Why?
15. Did you have the opportunity to work in an international team with colleagues from abroad? What did this cooperation look like?

16. Did the vocational training programme abroad differ from the one at your school? If so, in what way?
17. Did you have any difficulties during your learning mobility abroad? If so, what did they result from? How were these problems solved?
18. What did you do in your free time? Did you engage in any programmes of additional cultural activities? How do you rate it? Was it an important element of your trip?

IV. Interactive game (approx. 10 min)

The moderator distributes paper and pens. Each participant receives a card with the sentence: "When I think about the learning mobility, I think about..." . Participants are asked to complete the sentence.

V. Competence development (approx. 20 min)

I would like to ask you about the specific skills you have obtained during the internship and how, in your opinion, will you be able to use them in the future?

19. Did you learn any new skills or acquire new knowledge during the transnational mobility? What did they concern?
[inquire about skills in the following areas]:

Professional competences area:
20. Has your competence of using specialist tools, equipment, devices and machines changed?
21. Did you come across any new technologies?
22. Have you experienced a different way of managing or organising work?
23. Did the transnational mobility make you aware that, for example, you still need to develop certain skills in some areas, or quite the opposite?

Language competences area:
24. Have your foreign language skills improved?
25. Did the trip abroad helped to break the barrier in speaking a foreign language?
26. Did you learn some occupation-related vocabulary?

Social, personal and intercultural competences area:
27. Did the transnational mobility have an impact on establishing contacts with other people?
28. Did the transnational mobility change your perception of people from other countries and cultures?
29. Have you established personal contacts with foreign co-workers met during the mobility? If so, are you planning to stay in touch?

The context of learning at school and internship/traineeship at home:
30. Was the process of acquiring knowledge during your stay abroad different than at your school? If so, in what way? Why?
31. During your time at school, did you participate in any practical training organised at the employer's at home or only abroad? If you participated in such training at home, what kind of classes are/were there? What are/were those classes based on? At what type of employers? How long did/does the practical training organised at the employer's last for?
32. *[If responses to the above question indicated, that the students also participated in other practical training in the home country, then ask about it]* Is there something that particularly distinguishes the transnational mobility from other internships/ traineeships that you had previously dealt with in the country? If so, what is the difference between the two?

33. Do you use at school skills acquired during transnational mobility? In what way?

IV. Overall assessment of the transnational mobility / Projection techniques (approx. 10 min)

Finally, let us think for a minute about the weaknesses and strengths of transnational learning mobilities. This is an important part of our interview. Perhaps thanks to your answers, we will be able to improve internships and traineeships implemented abroad in similar projects in the future.

34. How do you generally rate transnational mobility? What are its good and bad aspects?
35. Which classes/activities have been particularly useful and why?
36. Would you like to work permanently at the place where you have done your internship/traineeship? Why? / Why not? Would you like to work abroad in the future? Why? / Why not?
37. Are there any noticeable changes that were implemented at your school as a result of transnational training mobilities? (e.g. Did the curriculum of vocational training change? Did the students gain access to better equipment?)
38. Would you change something in the transnational mobility programmes to make them more useful for students? What would it be?
39. Can you imagine what your further education and your life would have looked like if you had not participated in the transnational mobility? *[if time allows, students could also describe the result of the projection in 2-3 sentences on the distributed pages]*
40. If you were to encourage others to participate in the transnational learning mobility, what arguments would you use?