Guide to individual in-depth interviews with students 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 European funds (LLP LdV / Erasmus +)

I. Introduction

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. Our conversation is anonymous, but I would like to remind you that for the purpose of further analysis I am obliged to record. However, I will not pass on any personal data to the Foundation or other third parties.

II. Information about the respondent (approx. 10 min)

The section below concerns the following information: the type of school the respondent attended at the time of the internship/ traineeship abroad (basic vocational school, technical upper secondary school, post-secondary non-tertiary school, specialised upper secondary school, other – what type?); industry/area of education; studied occupation/profession. This section also relates to the correlation between the career path, the field of transnational mobility, and the occupation studied at school.

Note: For the industry sector, at the level of the interview report, please refer to the following industry categorisation accepted for the quantitative part of the study: 1. administration and services; 2. construction; 3. electrical and electronic branch; 4. mechanical and mining-metallurgical branch; 5. agriculture and forestry with environmental protection; 6. tourism and catering; 7. medical and social; 8. creative arts.

The most important questions:

1. **Please tell me how it happened that after graduating from a lower secondary school you started to study at the vocational school (enquire about the choice of school and if the respondent knew that the school organised internships abroad: was it an important factor while selecting school?)**
2. **Please tell me about your education at school. What type of school did you attend? What occupation did you specialise in?**
3. **At present, are you still studying or working?**

If respondent is still studying:

4. **Where are you continuing your education? (what type of school/university, private/public institution, at the place of residence/in location other than the place of residence, full-time studies/part-time weekend studies /part-time evening studies)?**
5. **What subject do you study/ in what type of school? Is it a private or public school? Is the subject/field of study related to your previous education?**
6. **Why did you decide to continue your education in this particular place?**

NOTE: the relationship between learning and transnational mobility experience was also discussed in the section 4 of the guide.

If the respondent is in employment:

7. **In what occupation/profession? Are you working in your studied occupation and within industry in which the transnational mobility was conducted? If no, is there any link to your studied occupation/profession?**
8. **Is this a full-time job, a civil-law contract, your own business or another form of employment? Is it a permanent or casual job?**
9. **Please characterise the employer (branch of industry, its size, distance from the place of residence)?**
10. **Are you satisfied with your current employment situation?**
11. **Are you generally satisfied with your career path?**
12. **Are you satisfied with the received remuneration? Why?**

NOTE: the relationship between work and experience of transnational mobility was also discussed in the section 4 of the guide

If the respondent is neither in education nor in employment

13. Have you previously been working? If yes, then where? If yes, was it full-time employment, a civil-law contract, your own business or another form of employment?

14. For how long and in what ways did you look for employment?

15. Are you currently looking for a job?

NOTE: the relation to experience of transnational mobility was also discussed in the section 4 of the guide

III. Period of transnational mobility (approx. 15 min)

The section below concerns the experience of transnational mobility and description of the host company's practices.

1. **How well do you remember your transnational mobility?**

2. **Please tell me more about your transnational mobility(in which grade was it organised, to which country, was it compulsory to attend, did the entire class go, what was its duration, etc.?)**
3. **Do you remember the host institution of your transnational mobility? What kind of institution was it? (clarify if it was: a school? other practical training institution? small family business? small enterprise? medium size enterprise? a large company? a branch of an international concern? a public institution? an NGO? a large international organisation? etc.)**
4. **Please describe the learning activities undertaken as part of transnational mobility (duration each day, main activities, was an instructor present during the activities?, was it monitored by a Polish tutor from your school?)**
5. **What was the background of the host institution? (equipment, working conditions, infrastructure, company reputation, work organisation, etc.)**
6. **In addition to transnational mobility, did you also take part in internships in the home country? Is it possible to conclude that their programme and scope was in line with transnational mobility (whether Polish and foreign internship programmes were similar/ compatible/ mutually agreed/ jointly planned/ or correlated? If yes, how/ in what way?**

IV. Transnational mobility vs professional and personal development (approx. 20 min)

The section below relates to the benefits of internships and the contexts of development (professional skills, language, personal benefits, employability, career and professional development path).

1. **During your transnational mobility, did you acquire any new skills, abilities or knowledge? If so, please describe them (what they involved / what kind of skills/abilities/knowledge they were)?**
2. **Can you pin point anything that distinguishes your transnational mobility from other internships/ traineeships in which you have participated in the home country (or abroad)?**
3. **Were there any noticeable changes implemented at your school as a result of transnational learning mobilities? (e.g. did the curriculum of vocational training change? Did the students gain access to better equipment, etc?)**

Professional competence context:

4. **Did you acquire new professional skills thanks to transnational mobility?**
5. **Has your knowledge pertaining to the use of equipment, devices and machines changed? Did you come across new technologies? Have you learned new ways of managing or organising work?**
6. **Have your new skills been confirmed by any certificates? Did they prove useful after finishing the mobility? If so, how**? [Note: especially ask for the Europass Mobility certificate - (!) The context of the usefulness of certificates is also raised in the question 22]

Language competence context:

7. **Have your foreign language skills improved upon your return from the mobility? In what way? Why?**
8. **Did the trip help you in mastering the occupational language? Why?**
9. **Did the trip have an impact on your further learning of a foreign language?**

Personal and social context:

10. **As a result of the transnational mobility, do you think that there has been a change in your personal life? If so, what? Why?**
11. **Did the transnational mobility have an impact on establishing contacts with other people?**
12. **Did the transnational mobility change your perception of people from other countries and cultures?**

International cooperation context:

13. **Did you have the opportunity to work in an international team? If yes, what did this cooperation look like?**
14. **Do you maintain contact with people met during transnational mobility? If so, what kind of contact? How often? Why with those people?**
15. **Do you think that transnational mobility allowed you to overcome some barriers in taking up employment, including employment abroad?**

Influence of transnational mobility on the career path:

16. **Has the transnational mobility influenced your career path?**
17. **Did the classes/ tasks/ experience gained prove to be particularly useful in further professional development? Why? If so - which especially?**

If respondent is still studying:

18. **Has the transnational mobility influenced in any way your decision to continue studying? If so, how? Did it help you to identify any areas of development, hence has strengthened your decision regarding further education within a given field?**
19. **Does transnational mobility experience help in learning?**
20. **Does transnational mobility experience facilitate entering the labour market for young people?**

If respondent is in employment:

21. **Did participation in transnational mobility help you to find a job?**
22. **Did you mention your participation in transnational mobility during interviews with employers (or at any stage of recruitment)? Did you show any certificates you had received? Did the employer ask for certification?** [Note: especially ask for the Europass Mobility certificate].
23. **Do you use skills acquired during transnational mobility in your current or previous work places? If so, which ones, and how?**
24. **Do you generally think that transnational mobility programmes facilitate entering the labour market for young people?**

If the respondent is neither in education nor in employment:

25. **Do you think that participation in transnational mobility can help you find a job?**
26. **What could be changed in transnational mobility programmes to increase their impact on job finding for vocational school graduates?**

27. **How would you describe an ideal transnational mobility, one that would increase the chances of finding a job? What classes should it include?**

VI. Summary/ general assessment of transnational mobility (approx. 15 min)

1. **What would you change in internship/traineeship programmes abroad to make them more useful for students? How can they be improved?**
2. **Looking back, how do you generally assess transnational mobility? Was it worth taking part in? Why yes, or why not?**
3. **If you were to encourage others to participate in transnational learning mobility, what arguments would you use?**

Thank you for your time.