

## Description of practical placement situation in Romania

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In Romania, the Practical Placement (PP) in higher education institutions is regulated by the Law No. 258/2007. At the same time, the PP activity is included in the set of compulsory normative requirements of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS). According to the regulations, PP is compulsory part of the curriculum for each 1<sup>st</sup> cycle study program; the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle the curriculum should include PP activity or scientific research activity, or both. In each of the cases the PP is acknowledged by ECTS credits. The PP learning objectives and outcomes, length, credit points (CP) allocation, themes and evaluation methodology are described in the PP syllabus in the same manner and level of detail as for any other subject in the curriculum.

The minimum level requirements stipulated by ARACIS at national level are of 2-3 weeks of practical stages per year, beginning with the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of study, and stages for development of graduation thesis, in the last year of study. The CP allocation may vary (e.g. in Transilvania University of Brasov, for engineering study programs, PP has 4 CP per year – in years 2 and 3 – and 10 CP in year 4 – which is the last of the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle and includes both practical placement and development of graduation thesis). The PP may take place in a distributed way – during the academic year, or lumped – in well defined periods. As *host organizations* there may be institutions, enterprises, research units, laboratories of the faculty or of other faculties within the accredited higher education framework. The students that are already employed may perform PP at their workplace, if the requirements from the PP syllabus are fulfilled.

Practical stages are organized based on the Practical Placement Agreement, which contains information related to the place and period of PP, organization and tutoring, the responsible people in the university and on the host organization behalf, etc.

In Romania all these three possibilities exist: enterprises search for students in order to select future employees, so they are offering practical places; students search for an enterprise in order to gain practical knowledge or become an employee of the company; university search for PP in companies for their students in order to fulfill the curricula. Within Transilvania University of Brasov, in the third case – university driven – the cooperation with companies for student practical placements is oriented, supported and controlled through an authorized department (Department of Links between University and the Socio-Economic Environment).

RCPP bodies in Romania student placement mediation are very rare. However, some of the universities or only faculties within universities may have developed, during the last years, specialized departments to deal with U-E cooperation for PP organisation, but there is no tradition in this domain.

Only some enterprises are in close contact with universities by means of a formal collaboration agreement. In order to attract students the company, can choose to organize job-shops at universities, ask for recommendations from the teachers, publish information on the internet or set posters in faculties. The students are selected based on their applications and after being interviewed.

Usually, the enterprise organizes the entire activity of the student during the PP period. According to the size of the enterprise, it may happen that a specific department is in charge with the organization of the PP activity.

The student chooses the company where to perform the “practicum”.

During the PP, the student can have a labor contract for a determined period of time with the enterprise (this means he/she could also receive a salary, meal tickets or/and other benefits). The duration of the practicum is established by the enterprise.

During the PP time the student has to fulfill the tasks defined in a job description form. The PP is finalized with a report containing the presentation of the activity performed during the PP. In some companies, at the end of the contract, the responsible persons from the enterprise fill in an evaluation form with information about: the tasks that had to be solved by the candidate and the degree of completion, the obtained results, the candidate’s personality, abilities and career perspectives.

Some difficulties and obstacles are summarized below:

- a student applies at more companies and he/she is selected by more than one, make his/her choice and then forgets to inform the others (complicates the process within the company);
- the final evaluation of the students is not always performed by both entities: enterprise and university;
- not all the enterprises in Romania have a “PP culture”; the university cooperates mainly with multinational enterprises, that have already tradition in organizing PP, the others are reserved in offering PP for students;
- not all the professors in charge with PP activity in the faculties have a “PP culture”; since the activity is not specifically paid, it depends on each professor how he/she understands to carry on the responsibilities in a proper way; an efficient cooperation is based on good and real time communication, seriousness and commitment;
- the international placements are at a very beginning stage and the benefits from better systems is still low (e.g. in University Transilvania of Brasov there are only 10-20 placement mobility flows per year);
- since the duration of compulsory PP (specified in the curriculum) is of 2-3 weeks per year, the students are not always motivated to perform 1-3 months PP in enterprises, as E would be interested.