

ENGAGING ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEMS FOR THE YOUTH

Action Plan for Cross-Ecosystem Internships

Deliverable No.	D1.5 (3)
Due date	31.05.2024
Type	Report
Dissemination level	Public (PU)
Status	Final
Lead beneficiary	IAT – WH GE
Authors	Anna Butzin, Kerstin Meyer (IAT – WH GE)



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement No. 101100432

About this report

This report is prepared by the Institute of Work and Technology of the Westphalian University of Applied Sciences Gelsenkirchen as part of working package 1, “Analysis and co-creation of programme activities,” Task D1.5, “Action Plans for cross-ecosystem activities.”

Suggested citation:

Butzin, A.; Meyer, K. (2024): Action Plan for cross-ecosystem internships. Deliverable 1.5(3) of the project Ecosys4you – Engaging Entrepreneurial Ecosystems for the Youth, funded by the European Union’s Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Programme. Gelsenkirchen: Institute for Work and Technology.

Content

About this report.....	II
1 Objective.....	4
2 Organization before internship (6 months)	5
2.1 Key Elements	6
2.2 Reach-out	6
2.3 Accompany	Fehler! Textmarke nicht definiert.
3 Support during the internship (2-3 months).....	8
4 Evaluation and alumni support after the internship (2 months)	8

1 Objective

The Internship Programme is organised by the Ecosys4you project partnership (www.ecosys4you.eu) to establish connections between the Entrepreneurial Ecosystems in the Ruhr, Varna, and Slovenia. Ecosys4you has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement No. 101100432.

This action plan describes the process of developing a high-quality, cross-ecosystem internship programme for students to work in start-ups following a "getting ready" mission: getting ready to start a company. The objective is to ensure a maximum outcome of the internships for both start-ups and interns through a thorough application process, a smart and comprehensive internship procedure, accompanying activities and a clearing service for interns and employers (in case of different expectations of the cross-country exchange). The application process enables the disclosure of the expectations of interns and start-ups to transform this into an individual internship experience.

The ecosys4you project has two batches. The first batch, which includes interns from Varna and Slovenia, will take place in the Ruhr area in 2024. The second batch, which will take place in Varna in spring 2025, will also include interns from the Ruhr area and Slovenia.

Benefits for start- and scale-ups

With the offering of an internship, the start-up helps motivated persons interested in starting a venture on their entrepreneurial journey. With the contacts, advertisement and matchmaking of the Ecosys4you partners, the Ecosys4you team enables the application of motivated and talented interns from Varna (Bulgaria) and Slovenia to start-ups. The Ecosys4you team provides recognition of the start-ups' support (e.g. at the webpage and events) and invites the start-ups to participate in the other activities of Ecosys4you (e.g. side programme, mentoring and joint classes) and interact with the entrepreneurial ecosystems in the Ruhr, Varna and Slovenia.

Benefits for interns:

- Cost compensation: Ecosys4you offers accommodations, side events, and free public transport.
- Start-up-internship: Ecosys4you arranges high-quality ERASMUS+ eligible internships in local start-ups from its network.
- Skill enhancement: Interns develop essential entrepreneurial skills such as business planning, marketing strategies, financial management, and more.
- Mentorship from start-up founders: Interns learn from experienced founders who will guide them through the ins and outs of building a successful business.
- Interns dive deep into the regional dynamic entrepreneurial ecosystem: Interns connect with like-minded individuals, industry professionals, and potential future collaborators.
- Free choice: Interns can choose the sector, e.g., cybersecurity, design, or social business.
- Hands-on projects: Interns apply their knowledge in a real-world setting and work on projects that challenge and inspire them to think creatively.
- Pitching sessions: Interns hone their presentation skills by participating in pitch sessions where they can showcase their innovative ideas.
- Programme and work certificate: Interns work, and start-up competences are recognised and certified.
- Attractive social programme: Interns and the Ecosys4you Team visit festivals, sports events, and regional attractions (voluntary participation).

Batch 1: The Ruhr
Summer/Autumn 2024

Batch 2: Varna
Spring/Summer 2025



Figure 1: Batches in the Ecosys4you-Internship Programme

The following section first describes the activities involved in organising the cross-ecosystem internship programme (months 1-6), then the activities during the internship period (months 7-9) and finally the evaluation activities (months 10-12). The action plan uses explanatory examples and graphics from the first batch.

2 Organization before internship (6 months)

Clarify time frame: in which period should the internship take place? Within the Ecosys4you project, the first batch of interns will come between August and October 2024, the month of presence for all interns is September, as our Ecosys4you side programme will take place in September. Further questions relate to the internship's duration (in Ecosys4you the time frame is 8 to max. 12 weeks, flexible start and ending), who is allowed to participate (in Ecosys4you it is undergraduate and graduate students via the [Erasmus+ programme](#); age 18 to 35), is there a focus in terms of content (Entrepreneurial skills development, mentorship, and real-world projects). The organisation of the internship programme is divided into 3 areas: the back office, the external presentation and application process and the subsequent matchmaking.

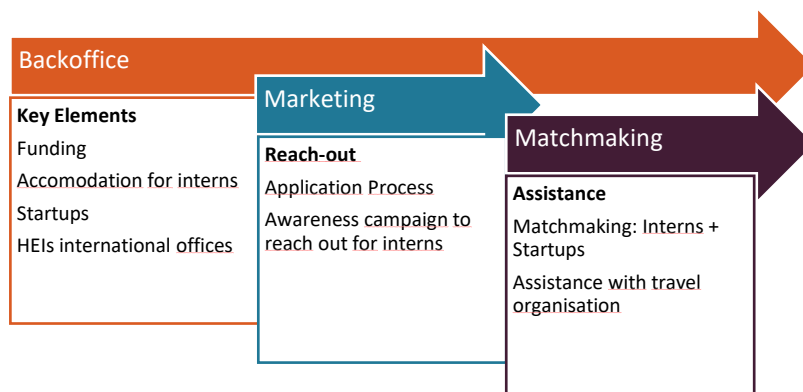


Figure 2: Actions before the Internship

2.1 Key Elements

Funding

The Ecosys4you team acquired two sponsors to support the internship programme. Thanks to the sponsoring, we can offer the interns free accommodations and an attractive side programme. A detailed description of the project and the internship programme was provided for companies as information background to facilitate the sponsoring decisions.

Accommodation for interns

The Ecosys4you team organised six apartments or rooms for the first batch of interns coming to the Ruhr. All the accommodations are located within the same district, which was important for us to ensure the interns could easily meet each other.

Start-ups

The Ecosys4you team acquired nine start-ups from the Ruhr ecosystem who are willing to host an intern from August until October 2024. Due to the high interest, there is indeed a critical mass of start-ups to choose from to find matching expertise for the interns. During the acquisition process, we clarified that the interns should be able to learn from the founders or middle management to get first-hand insights into what it is like to start a venture. Furthermore, it was clarified that the internship-providing company is required to:

- facilitate the full-time internship for a minimum of 8 weeks between August and October 2024
- enable insights into the work of the management
- provide a work environment that accommodates an English-speaking intern
- complete an internship certificate within five weeks of the internship
- dedicate a person as the primary contact for the intern (mentor)
- provide information for the Erasmus+ Learning Agreement in advance of the internship

HEIs International Offices

To appropriately address potential students, the Erasmus+ coordinators and staff of the universities' international offices need detailed information about the internship and Ecosys4you programmes. To ensure the flow of information, eleven meetings have been conducted with relevant staff of the universities in the Ruhr, Slovenia, and Varna. In addition, one of the four cross-ecosystem workshops was dedicated to developing the internship activity.

2.2 Reach-out

The target groups of the marketing activities for the internship programme are, firstly, the students. We aim to attract highly motivated young people interested in founding a business between 18 and 35 years old with sufficient English skills (occasionally German). The interns are usually students (occasionally, young graduates may be involved) and use ERASMUS+ internship funding, and Ecosys4you provides additional benefits (accommodation in Gelsenkirchen, side programme, public transport ticket, pocket money). All interns must participate in the Ecosys4you side programme (social events and a hackathon). We will ensure the interns' study background fits the requirements of the start-ups (e.g. technical expertise, etc.).

Awareness / Marketing Campaign to reach for interns

A detailed document on the awareness campaign can be found here: https://www.ecosys4you.eu/media/ecosys4you_communicationplan_final.pdf.

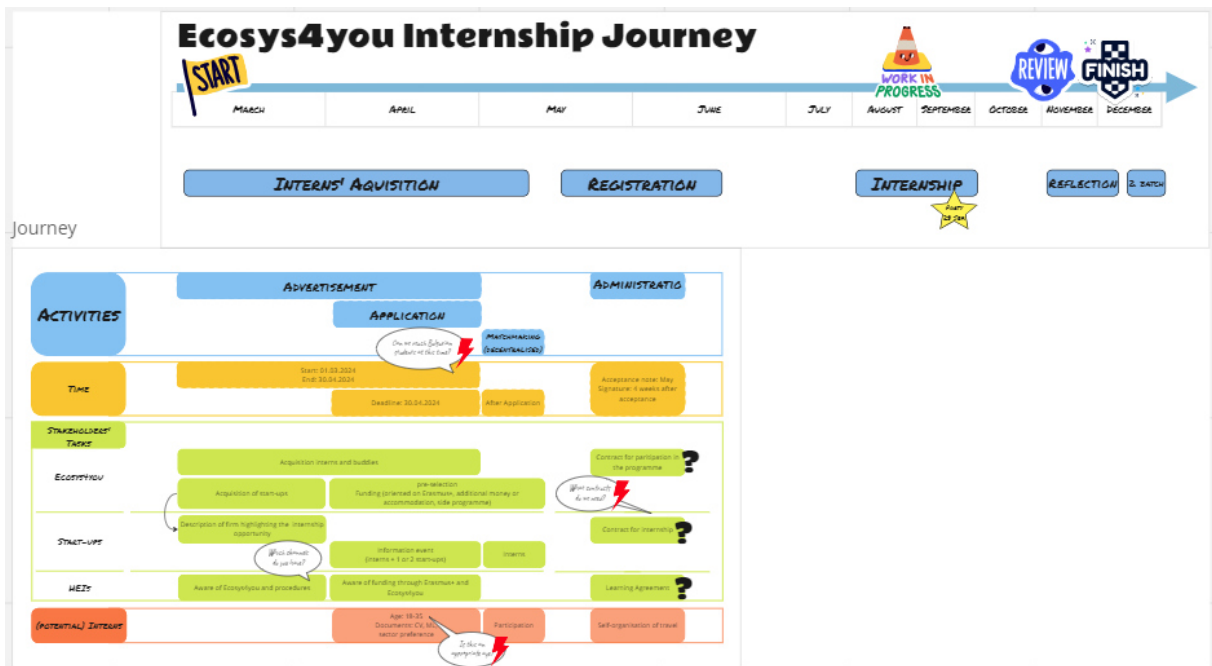


Figure 3: Miro board used as basis for developing the internship programme

Application Process

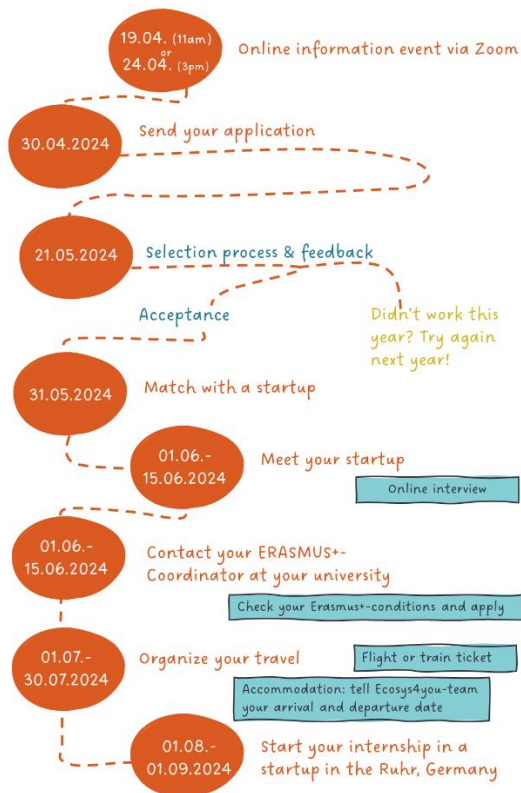


Figure 4: Application Process for first batch (The Ruhr 2024)

Application Form

We welcome students from Slovenia and the Varna Region in Bulgaria who are passionate about entrepreneurship, innovation, and making a positive impact on the world. English (and/or German) language is required. **Approximate desired internship period (min. 8 weeks, max. 12 weeks) starting [month] to [month].**

Submit your expression of interest by [date]. Don't forget to include your **CV (resume)**, the preferred dates and duration of your stay, a brief statement on why you're passionate about entrepreneurship and click the box in which sector you would like to do the internship.

- First name
- Surname
- E-mail address
- Name of university
- Study programme
- Age
- Choose your Sector (multiple answers possible)
- IT & Cybersecurity
- Engineering

- Design
- Social Business
- Sustainable fashion
- Not on list
- Approximate desired internship period (min. 8 weeks, max. 12 weeks) – Preferred dates of start & end
- Language Skills:
- English (required) [Native speaker | Business fluent | Good]
- German (additional) [Native speaker | Business fluent | Good | No knowledge]
- Cover letter with a brief statement on why you're passionate about entrepreneurship and the selected sector(s) (2000 letters)
- CV / Resume
- Further competencies (multiple answers possible)
- MSOffice Skills
- Social Media
- Web-Design
- Accounting
- Marketing & Sales
- Problem-solving
- Flexibility
- Team oriented
- Integrity & trust
- Business strategy knowledge (study in economics)
- Medical-tech background
- Administration knowledge
- Comments and questions

2.3 Matchmaking & Assistance

Organise Matchmaking: Interns + Startups

- Preselection of the most fitting candidate for your company by the Ecosys4you team
- May: Suggestion of a fitting interns
- End of May: Matchmaking between start-up and intern (online job interview): Start-ups and interns agree upon the duration and exact start and end date. Start-ups may specify a suitable period in advance.

Assistance with travel organisation, accommodation, arrival, and side programme

- June 24: settle the internship contract and the Erasmus+ Learning Agreement and ensure that each intern has organised the travel insurance.
- Upon arrival: signing the learning agreement (for ERASMUS+ students only)

3 Support during the internship (2-3 months)

During the internship programme, participants can engage in various side events such as a pub night, further social activities like football and barbecues, excursions, and ecosystem events like the ruhrSTARTUPWEEK, enhancing their experience in founding a company. They are accompanied by local students via a buddy programme and by the Ecosys4you project team.

The internship closes with a final event ceremony featuring a pitch and giving each intern recognition and a certificate for participation.

4 Evaluation and alumni support after the internship (2 months)

Feedback is obtained from the interns, the start-ups, the international offices and the ecosys4you team by means of surveys to evaluate the programme. The range of questions is as follows:

Survey with the interns:

- What entrepreneurial skills have you learnt?
- What will you take with you for your studies?
- Has your willingness to start a company increased?
- What did you miss during your stay?
- What do you think of the social events?
- What is your impression of the Ruhr start-up ecosystem?

Survey with the start-ups:

- Did the skills of the intern match your expectations?
- Was the support from the intern helpful?
- Would your company participate again? [Why? | Why not?]
- Does the programme contribute to your internationalisation activities?

Feedback with international offices regarding efficiency for the next batch:

- What questions came up in the process that we should clarify beforehand?
- What did the students report?
- What can be improved?
- What was particularly good?
- Would you let interns participate again?

Feedback within the Ecosys4you-team:

- What was good?
- What was missing?
- What should be changed?
- What needs to be improved in the next batch?

Finally, the interns are accepted into an alumni programme and asked to be buddies for the next batch.

Imprint

Publisher and Contact

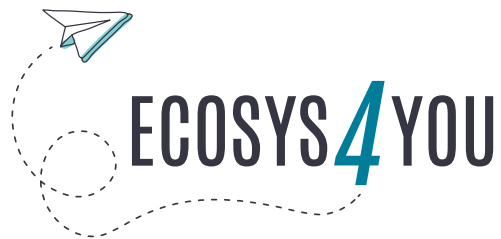
Westphalian University of Applied Sciences | Institute for Work and Technology

Anna Butzin

Munscheidstr. 14

D – 45886 Gelsenkirchen

<https://www.iat.eu>



Ecosys4you – Engaging Entrepreneurial Ecosystems for the Youth (2023-2026) strives to bridge the entrepreneurial ecosystems of the Ruhr in Germany, Varna in Bulgaria, and Slovenia by connecting young founders, start-ups, HEIs and other ecosystem actors.

Consortium



Funded by



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement No. 101100432