

Thinking Space No.39

“Praktikumsjahr” – a job orientation startup or how to prevent youth from becoming NEETs in the first place

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Connecting firms to students, transferring know-how between generations, building strengthening bridges and in this way supporting local European economies are all undeniable necessities for stabilizing the structures we all live in.

The Thinking Space Paper introduces “Praktikumsjahr” (=internship year) which operates a matching platform for young people in search of a job and orientation. It connects businesses with high school graduates through internships giving them the opportunity to get to know different companies within one year. Participants gain practical experience, get the chance to present themselves to participating companies and can even find a future position which will eventually prevent them from becoming a NEET. A successful orientation tool – interesting approach? Have a read!

Challenges like the aging of European societies¹, high national debts (not only due to the currently occurring Covid-19 expenses), uncertain pensions and the lack of job opportunities demand new job creation concepts for a stable future in most parts of Europe.

Praktikumsjahr wants to tackle these unfavorable predictions with a simple solution: bring willing, interested young people in contact with companies, looking for junior staff. Having had a lot of school graduates in their surroundings who did not know what job to apply to, Malte Bürger, Jan Herold Müller and Hendrik Heil founded the company Praktikumsjahr in 2017. The startup’s goal is to support young people in finding the right job through an internship year split: in a maximum of six phases, participants can get to know different companies and industries based on their personal interests.

Praktikumsjahr is financed by the companies that use the platform as a kind of “recruitment tool”. The Praktikumsjahr team supports before, during and after the matching process. Well-informed interns shorten the on-boarding time saving the companies costs and other resources.

Praktikumsjahr supports with advice regarding minimum wages, vacation days and working hours, so that there are no further efforts to be made by the companies. An internship often enables the company to better get to know a potential apprentice candidate and to promote the company with potential applicants, partners and clients.

¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/573324/population-projection-italy/>; retrieved 23.11.2020

For “newbies“ it is often very difficult to find the right position that aligns with their own interests, not knowing all options, or finding any position at all. Participating in an internship year provides an overview on possible occupational fields and functions as an orientation aid.² The platform presents company profiles to get a first glance of work fields, concrete activities and the occupation offered as part of the internship.

A high school graduate has the opportunity to create an individualized online profile and will be matched with interested companies to identify suitable jobs and where to potentially start a career following the internships. An average internship lasts two months and interns have the opportunity to work for different companies during the 12-month program. To date, 108 partners in 22 different sectors³ and over 800 interns

HOW MANY YOUNG PEOPLE WERE ACCOMPANIED AND HOW WAS THEIR PATH INFLUENCED?

There are already over 800 talents registered on our platform. During their internship year, we are in close exchange with the participants. At the end of an internship year, the decisions made and particular plans of the future are always different. However, everyone agrees on one thing. Their participation in our offering was an exciting experience and very enriching for them personally. Some interns directly started an apprenticeship at one of the companies they visited. So even if we do not always enable our talents to a well-suited job, it at the very least helps them form a very solid foundation for their decisions about the future.

(Jan Herold Müller,
Co-founder Praktikumsjahr)

WHAT MAKES THE PROJECT SO SUCCESSFUL?

The idea! Our approach to try out different professions in one year and to organize in one simple platform is unique. The idea is actually unique in a lot of ways. For one, it is an amazing and straightforward solution for those still unsure about what they are looking for after they leave school. An idea is particularly successful when it creates a win-win situation. Not only graduates benefit, but also the companies, which get to know a lot of new young talents throughout their partnership with us. This way, companies can get graduates excited about the profession in general and their own prospects with a particular company. Thus, it allows them to efficiently discover potential new trainees. In addition, the general public is aware of this particular social issue, therefore our simple solution is very easy to follow and comprehend.

(Malte Bürger,
Co-founder Praktikumsjahr)

are already part of Praktikumsjahr.

All that is needed from the applicant's side is a registration on the platform (including details, certificates, occupational fields of interest and a motivation letter). Afterwards, a call with the team of Praktikumsjahr explaining details is set up, followed by the search for the fitting firms.

After an interview, an internship contract is sent out stating the time and the position of the internship. Whenever the first internship starts, all following

² <https://praktikumsjahr.de/>; retrieved 23.11.2020

³ Sectors already covered are: construction, beauty/design, pharma, IT, electronics, gastronomy/hotel, wood, agriculture/gardening, food&beverage, machinery, media/marketing, medicine/health, metal, care, interior design, social, taxation&law, technical offices, transport/logistics, sales, insurances/consultancies, administration&finance.

internships should already be arranged and all details about the internships can be looked up in the applicant's online profile. Both sides (intern and the company representative) give feedback to one another in order to support self-reflection following each occupation.

In Germany, companies participate due to the lack of junior staff and because they would like to find the perfect trainee for their team. In countries like Greece, Italy or Spain where the unemployment rate is exceptionally high, companies might be interested for completely different reasons. Finding the right candidate could be a reason but supporting the local economy, transferring business knowledge, company traditions or including new, digitalized, innovative ideas to keep a company idea alive can be potential reasons for integrating the young generation.

The EU report Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion 2020 states, that "while apprenticeships could be further developed, traineeships are the most implemented measure. Close monitoring could help to minimize the risk of misuses as an alternative to employment contracts"⁴. Praktikumjahr is an inspiring example of how high school graduates and companies benefit from internships through the creation of win-win relationships and long-term engagement.

⁴ Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion The Youth Guarantee country by country – Italy, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=13643&langId=en>, retrieved 19.01.2021