

# FINLAND'S HARD-WORKING AND CONFIDENT EXPERTS ABROAD!

Impact assessment of CIMO's international trainee programmes

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Reports and surveys 2017:4b

ISBN 978-952-13-6375-7 (pdf)

ISSN-L 1798-8918

ISSN 1798-8926 (pdf)

Layout: Grano Oy

[www.oph.fi](http://www.oph.fi)

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

International traineeships have been one of CIMO's (currently the Finnish National Agency for Education) founding blocks since 1952. In addition to handling training placements, CIMO also began to communicate information about trainee opportunities and award grants to support the traineeships of Finnish students. For example, placements in local organisations and in the programmes of the EU's organs, the UN's organisations and other international organisations were then included in the available traineeships. Later, traineeships were introduced in Finnish organisations operating abroad, such as Finnish diplomatic missions and Finnish Academic and Cultural Institutes, Finpro and Tekes offices, and in positions of lecturers of Finnish language and culture. In the 21st century, the geographical focus of traineeships moved to countries outside the EU and the operational focus moved to coordinating and supporting traineeships. In addition to applying theoretical knowledge to practice, deepening and expanding one's professional language skills has also played a central role in international traineeships. Ultimately, the aim of traineeships is to increase competitiveness.

Since starting its operations, CIMO (Centre for International Mobility) has offered a variety of trainee programmes. Its current programme structure has formed in the 21st century. The selection of international trainee programmes offered by CIMO has been modified and developed over the years. At the same time, new opportunities, such as Erasmus traineeships, have become available. The programmes have been popular. For example, a total of 2,228 students and recent graduates submitted their applications in 2015 and grants for the traineeship were awarded to 270 of them. From year to year, the number of applicants has varied between 1,000 and 2,000, and the grant has been awarded to about 300 applicants every year. The objective of this impact assessment is to examine particularly the importance and impact of these so-called CIMO's own, nationally funded programmes, and how they compare with the other international training placements available.

At the beginning of 2017, CIMO's operation was transferred to the Finnish National Agency for Education after the old Finnish National Board of Education and CIMO merged forming a new agency that will continue the work of its predecessors by assuming the responsibility for the development of education, early childhood education and lifelong learning and the promotion of internationality. In the assessment, the programmes are still referred to as CIMO's programmes because of the time period covered by the assessment.

The impact assessment was carried out between 1 October 2016 and 31 January 2017. The external assessor was Lauri Tuomi, DSc (Econ & BusAdmin), CEO of Profitmakers Oy.

## 2. CIMO'S INTERNATIONAL TRAINEE PROGRAMMES

CIMO's (currently the Finnish National Agency for Education) international trainee programmes are targeted at higher education students and recent graduates. The applicant must have turned 18 and be a Finnish citizen or live in Finland permanently and his/her full-time studies must have taken place in Finland. When the traineeship begins, a maximum of one year may have passed since the applicant's graduation. Depending on the programme and training placement, there may have been stricter criteria for the applicant (e.g. language skills, maximum age, educational background, etc.). There have been two application periods per year. The placements have been available to see in an online service<sup>1</sup> and information about them has been communicated in co-operation with higher education institutions (HEIs).

Until now, the application processes have been implemented as country and organisation programmes. In the country programme, the applicant has applied for a traineeship in a specific country, and a suitable placement has been found for the applicant in the destination country. In future, the work duties as well as the destination country will be determined in advance. The country programme has included placements in countries such as China, India, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Peru and Russia.

In organisation programmes, placements in different sectors have been available in, for example, the following organisations:

- Finpro offices
- Finnish diplomatic missions
- Finnish Cultural and Academic Institutes
- Providers of teaching of Finnish language and culture abroad
- Suomi-koti residential and care homes
- Newspapers and magazines of expatriate Finns and The Finnish American Heritage Center
- Organisations engaged in development co-operation abroad
- Tekes – the Finnish Funding Agency for Innovation

The time period chosen for the impact assessment was 2006–2014. Because of the time period covered by the assessment, the programmes will later be referred to as CIMO's programmes. At the beginning of 2017, CIMO's operation was transferred to the Finnish National Agency for Education after the old Finnish National Agency for Education and CIMO merged to form a new agency.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.cimo.fi/ohjelmat/kansainvalinen\\_harjoittelu](http://www.cimo.fi/ohjelmat/kansainvalinen_harjoittelu) (link in Finnish)

Table 1 describes the applicants for the programmes and the awarded grants. The figures for the different years are not fully comparable because of organisational changes and applicant statistics. However, the figures provide a sufficiently accurate overall picture of the popularity of the programmes and the numbers of grants awarded. More than 15,000 students and recent graduates were interested in the programmes during the period examined. Grants were awarded to more than 2,000 trainees and an average of about 13 per cent of the trainees received a grant. CIMO's international trainee programmes account for 8–10 per cent of the total number of international trainees in higher education. For example, in 2014, CIMO's programmes accounted for about 8 per cent of the overall total in higher education, as a total of 2,808 trainees were recorded in the 2014 statistics (universities: 765, universities of applied sciences: 2,044).

**TABLE 1. APPLICANTS FOR CIMO'S INTERNATIONAL TRAINEE PROGRAMMES AND AWARDED GRANTS BETWEEN 2006–2014**

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
Grants awarded	274	239	247	216	245	186	220	196	223	2046
Number of applications	2530	1912	1436	1429	1661	1550	1479	1534	1504	15035

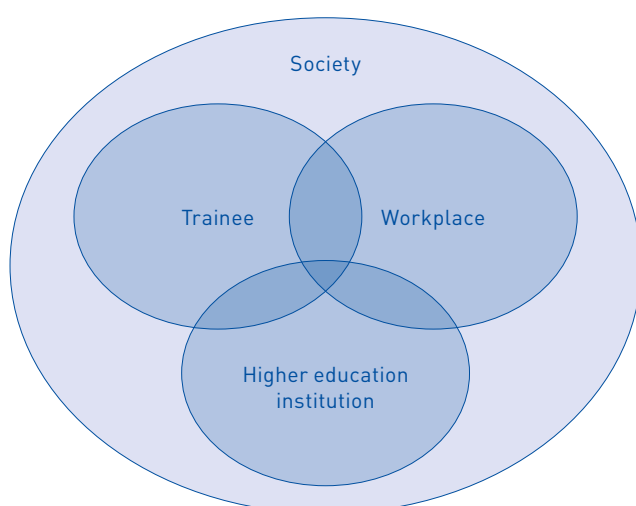
### 3 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REPORT AND METHODS USED

The objective of this report was to assess the impact in line with the following main objectives:

- CIMO's trainee programmes in relation to the HEIs' own international trainee programmes: do they overlap and what kind of added value do CIMO's programmes bring to the selection of programmes in HEIs, etc.
- How important have CIMO's trainee programmes been regarding the trainees' later careers?
- How could trainee programmes be developed while taking into account the future competence requirements in working life, for example?

A steering group, which convened three times during the process, was set up to support and guide the impact assessment work. The members of the steering group were: Marjaana Kopperi and Juha Ketolainen from the Internationalisation Services of the Finnish National Board of Education (former CIMO), Riku Warjovaara from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Leena Wahlfors and Marko Niemi from Universities Finland Unifi (Finnish Council of University Rectors), Peter Finell from Centria University of Applied Sciences (representative of Arenery, Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences) and Mauno Kytönen from Finpro. Specialists Tarja Nousiainen, Jaana Mutanen, Riitta Uotila, Ulla Härmä, Ritva Ukkonen and Niina Juuti from the group "Traineeships, post-graduate studies and Finnish language and Culture" led by Counsellor of Education Marjaana Kopperi at the Internationalisation Services of the Finnish National Agency for Education participated in compiling the background material for the assessment project, contacting the target groups and carrying out the technical implementation of the Webropol survey.

The impact of CIMO's international trainee programmes was examined from four points of view (Figure 1): trainees, higher education institutions, workplaces and society.



**FIGURE 1. TARGET GROUPS OF THE ASSESSMENT AND THE SOCIETAL IMPACT OF TRAINEESHIP PROGRAMMES**



**Regarding trainees, the points of view for the assessment were:**

- strengthening of international competences (framework of hidden competence)
- strengthening of professional competence (application of theory to practice and strengthening of practical skills)
- the position of the traineeship in the student's study paths (significance of consecutive traineeships, strengthening of international competences as a whole: importance of the traineeship)
- factors that affected the choice and direction of career
- other benefits experienced by the trainee (paths to working life or further studies)

**Regarding higher education institutions, the points of view for the assessment are:**

- CIMO's international trainee programmes in relation to HEIs' own programmes: overlapping, possible added value
- speed-up of studies: significance and importance of credit points from the point of view of the HEI, possibilities to provide ECTS credits for the traineeship, stronger motivation to learn, importance of international competences regarding success in studies
- other points of view brought up by the HEI (e.g. international partnerships and contacts with the workplaces in CIMO's programmes)
- the position of the traineeship in international study paths, projects in study units, RDI/ research activities and the thesis process: the role of CIMO's traineeship

**Regarding the workplaces, the points of view for the assessment are:**

- the importance of CIMO's international trainee programmes for workplaces: e.g. fresh knowledge and competence, the importance of the compatibility of the student and the workplace, identification of future competence requirements

**Regarding the societal impact, the report looks at:**

- the special features and possible added value of CIMO's programmes compared with other programmes
- the impact of trainee programmes on the strengthening of international competences in Finnish working life
- the role of trainee programmes in identifying the transformation and competence needs in working life
- strengthening of knowledge of growing economies and developing countries and strengthening of contacts with those countries through training programmes (link to strengthening of competitiveness)

**Cross-cutting themes:**

- the role of 'the alumni of CIMO's trainee programmes' in the development of the programmes
- the role of trainee programmes in identifying the change in the competence requirements of working life, including making hidden competences visible
- the role of CIMO's trainee programmes in speeding up studies (cf. HEIs' performance requirements regarding degree completion times)
- the role and development of the network providing training placements
- impact at micro level: effects reflected in the student's immediate circle (strengthening the importance and understanding of internationality among the trainee's family and friends and in the communities in which the trainee is engaged)

## 4. TARGET GROUP-SPECIFIC RESULTS

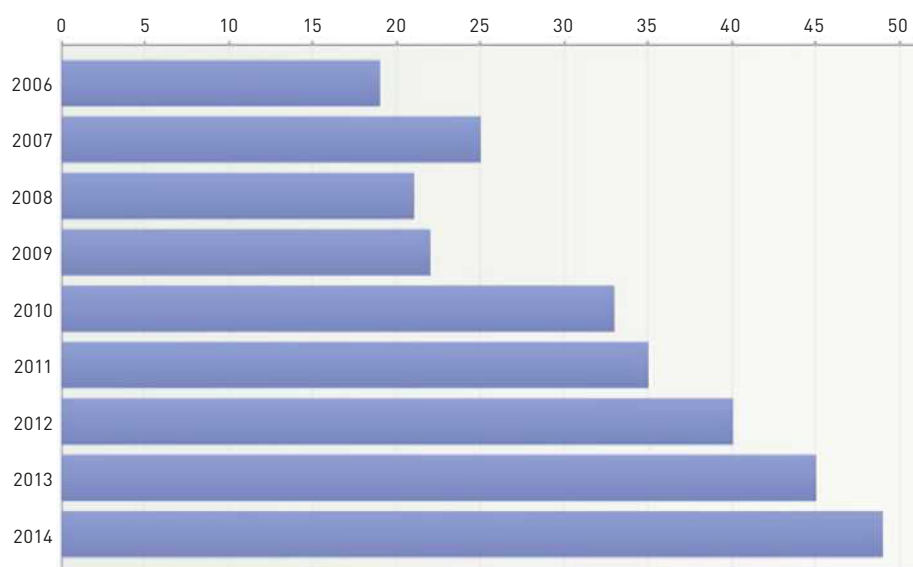
The results of the implemented Webropol surveys and the semi-structured interviews (theme interviews) conducted to identify the impact of CIMO's international trainee programmes are presented below.

### 4.1. Trainees

The questionnaire was sent to those who had participated in CIMO's international training programmes between 2006–2014. The survey was emailed to a total of 2,547 addresses and responses were received from 290 people. The email addresses were retrieved from programmes that are still offered by CIMO. Only email addresses that were of a technically correct form were selected to the mailing list.

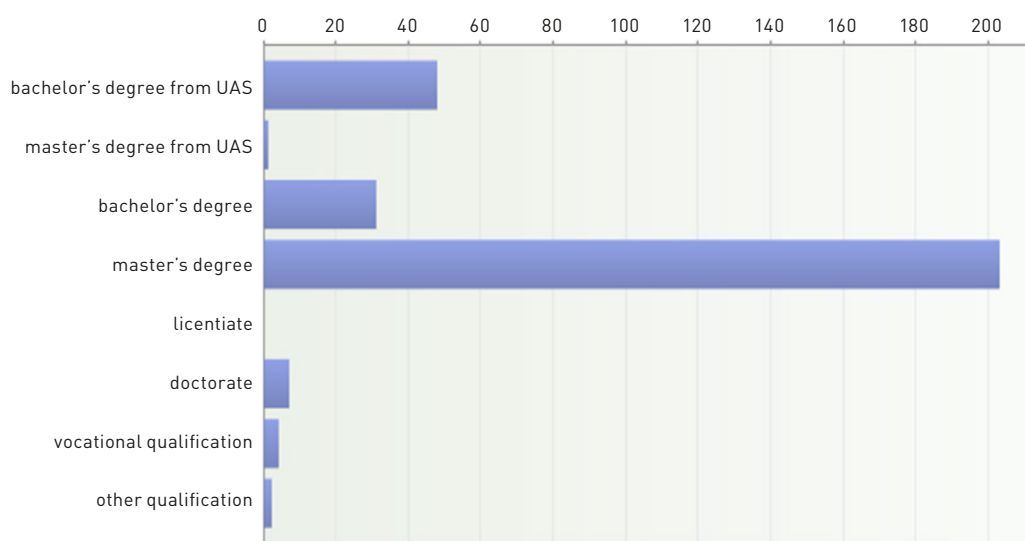
In connection with the survey, those interested in volunteering for a semi-structured interview were asked to notify the sender. The number of people interested was larger than anyone had expected: about 150 of those who had previously completed a traineeship reported their interest in participating. Some of them expressed their interest by also contacting the sender separately. This first point of contact with the impact already indicated the forthcoming results. From the point of view of the trainees, the programme has at the very least left a permanent trace in their memory and a desire to make their experiences from the traineeship and the impact it had on them as individuals available for wider use.

The respondents are distributed comprehensively over the different years examined (Figure 2): there are respondents for each year. Even those who had completed their training more than ten years ago showed their interest in participating in the survey and the semi-structured interview conducted to supplement it.



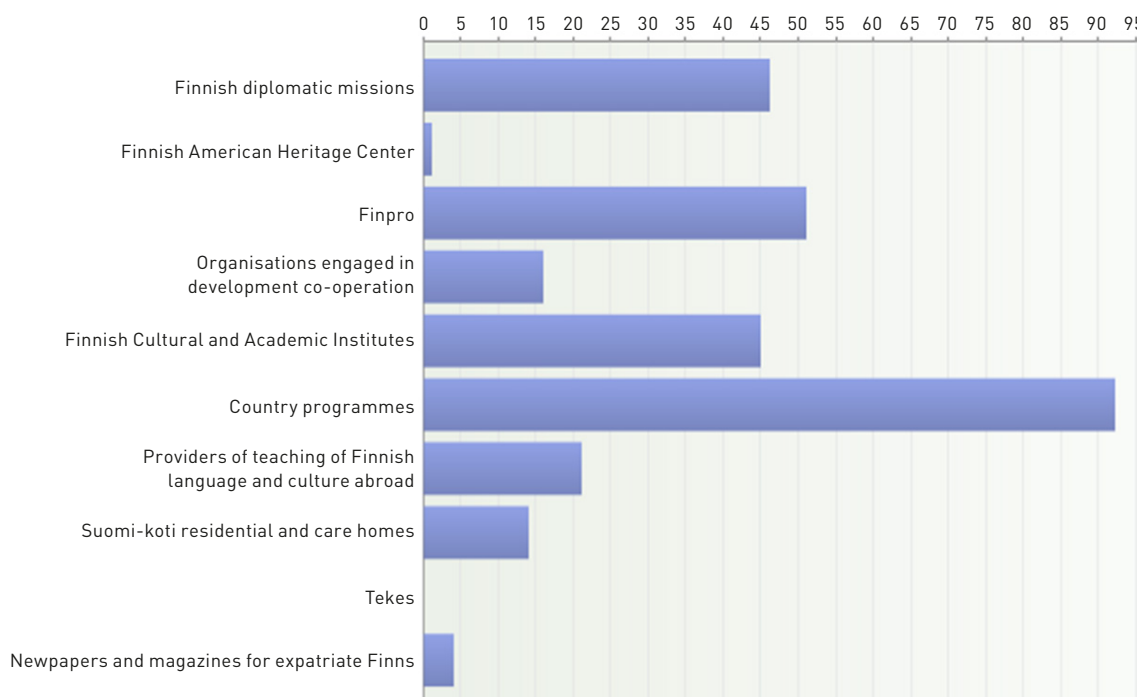
**FIGURE 2. YEAR OF COMPLETING INTERNATIONAL TRAINEESHIP**

The current educational background of the participants (Figure 3) is also relative to who participated in the programme, with the emphasis on university-level education (the majority had a master's degree) and degrees from universities of applied sciences in second place.



**FIGURE 3. CURRENT EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND OF RESPONDENTS**

The workplaces are presented in Figure 4. The distribution also describes the distribution of the participants in the programme. Because the workplaces of those who participated in country programmes varied, they have been given as one response option. The next largest numbers of respondents had completed their traineeships in Finnish diplomatic missions or Finpro offices and Finnish Cultural Institutes.



**FIGURE 4. RESPONDENTS' INTERNATIONAL TRAINING PLACEMENTS/ TRAINEE PROGRAMMES**

The trainees who responded to the survey had completed their traineeships in a wide variety of destination countries, in a total of 59 countries globally. The largest destination countries were Russia, USA, Argentina, Chile, India, China and Canada

The experienced impact on career shows an emphasis on professional language skills and knowledge of the destination country

The participants of trainee programmes were asked to rate the impact of the international traineeship on their careers (Table 2). The respondent was asked to base the assessment on a scale of 1 - 5 (1=minor impact and 5= strong impact). The strongest effect was experienced on the development of professional language skills (average 4.06). Respondents also reported a strong effect on their knowledge of the destination country or region from the point of view of their careers (average 3.88). The impact on learning new skills that are significant regarding employment (average 3.56) and finding employment in their own field (average 3.31) was reported second strongest. The impact on the formation of professional networks was considered to be the weakest.

**TABLE 2. EXPERIENCED IMPACT ON CAREER**

Impact	average
Finding employment in one's own field	3.31
Learning new skills that are significant regarding employment	3.56
Increasing knowledge of the destination country or region from the point of view of career	3.88
Formation of professional networks	2.88
Development of professional language skills	4.06

## Traineeships strengthen general professional qualifications in particular – emphasis on communication and interaction skills in an international environment

An open-ended question was asked about the development of professional competence. Respondents described the following competences in the different programmes and their current duties in the last three workplaces. Central competences and the number of respondents who had worked in international positions after their traineeship are described below:

- **Diplomatic missions:** command of different working languages, communication skills, reporting, general understanding of international work, project skills, interaction skills, problem solving skills and organisation skills (25/46 had worked or were working abroad)
- **Finpro:** language skills, negotiation and communication skills, organisation skills, project skills, contacting customers, market analyses, acquisition of information, networking, behaviour in working life (21/46 had worked or were working abroad)
- **Fin-Am Heritage Centre:** N/A, only one respondent
- **Finnish Cultural Institutes:** communications skills, event production, project management, language skills, operating in an international environment, communication between different cultures, technical IT skills, networking skills (16/44 had worked or were working abroad)

- **Country programmes:** improvement of language skills, communications skills, performance skills, operating in different cultural environments, IT skills, confidence, organisation skills (several answers concerning the low level of challenge in work tasks) (18/87 had worked or were working abroad)
- **Organisations for development co-operation:** improvement of language skills, organisation of events, project management skills, self-leadership, operating in a multicultural environment, understanding of different cultures, writing reports (5/10 had worked or were working abroad)
- **Finnish language and culture:** teaching skills, strengthening of language skills, skills in applying knowledge to practice and planning teaching (8/21 had worked or were operating abroad)
- **Suomi-koti residential and care homes:** team management skills, group steering skills, know-how in nursing care, encountering elderly people in nursing care work, language skills (2/14 had worked or were working abroad)
- **Newspapers and magazines for expatriate Finns:** basics of journalistic work, command of the editing process (1/4 had worked or was working abroad).

The development of professional competence reflects the nature of the work in the workplace. In some of the workplaces, the trainee would have expected more challenging work tasks. International traineeship seems to have an effect on whether the person will later be working abroad. In many programmes, about one half of the respondents had worked or were working abroad. In a few programmes, working abroad played a less important role, possibly because of the professional competence requirements applied in different countries, which affected the opportunities to seek work abroad (country programmes, Suomi-koti residential and care homes, and Finnish language and culture).

## Strong impact on the development of international competences

The impact of traineeship on the development of international competences was assessed by using the framework of hidden competences created as a result of a study implemented by CIMO and Demos Helsinki in 2013<sup>2</sup>. In the study of hidden competences, an extended understanding of international competences parallel to international competences - **language skills, tolerance** and **intercultural competence** - was formed. This extended understanding also included new key competences: **resilience, productivity** and **curiosity**. Competences concerning efficiency, analytical approach, problem solving skills and reliability were associated with the theme of productivity. Persistence and self-knowledge were the factors associated with the theme of resilience. The theme of curiosity comprised networking ability, tolerance and co-operation and additionally, some slightly different components: interest towards new issues, cultural knowledge and adaptability. In addition to the above-mentioned elements associated with hidden competences, respondents were also asked to assess the impact of the international traineeship on the development of courage and general language skills.

Table 3 presents the development of international competences as experienced by the respondents. The impact had been strongest on courage (4.11) and next strongest on general language skills (4.01). As regards hidden competences, the impact had been greatest on

<sup>2</sup> Demos Helsinki (2013) Piilotettu Osaaminen. (Report in Finnish) [http://www.cimo.fi/instancedata/prime\\_product\\_julkaisu/cimo/embeds/cimowwwstructure/28224\\_Piilotettu\\_osaaminen\\_raportti\\_valmis\\_paivitetty092013.pdf](http://www.cimo.fi/instancedata/prime_product_julkaisu/cimo/embeds/cimowwwstructure/28224_Piilotettu_osaaminen_raportti_valmis_paivitetty092013.pdf)

curiosity (4.01) and almost equal on resilience (3.97). Compared to these, the impact on productivity had been medium strong. Regarding international competences, differences could be identified between the organisation and country programmes in productivity, courage and general language skills. As regards productivity, the assessments of those who had participated in country programmes were slightly lower than the assessments of those who had participated in organisation programmes. As regards courage and general language skills, the assessments given by those who had participated in country programmes were higher than the assessments given by those who had participated in organisation programmes.

**TABLE 3. DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL COMPETENCE**

Competence	all	organisation programmes	country programmes
Productivity	3.26	3.29	3.06
Curiosity	4.01	3.86	4.01
Resilience	3.97	3.86	4.00
Courage	4.11	3.82	4.22
General language skills	4.01	3.72	4.18

### International traineeship has a varying or neutral impact on studies

When respondents who had completed an international traineeship were asked about the impact of the international traineeship on their studies, most of them found the impact neutral. However, international traineeship may have even slowed down studies in some cases. Some participants had been able to integrate their studies strongly into their international traineeship: the interviewees brought up examples of how it was possible, for example, to complete study units online during a longer traineeship period. Also, it had been possible to work on the thesis during the traineeship. Additionally, the student's own HEI may have acknowledged what the student had learned during the traineeship by awarding ECTS credits.

### THE IMPACT OF THE INTERNATIONAL TRAINEESHIP HAS A POSITIVE INFLUENCE ON THE STUDENT'S IMMEDIATE CIRCLE

At the level of the impact on individuals, there was also a desire to obtain additional information about the possible impact on the immediate circles (family, relatives, friends) of those who had completed an international traineeship. Although the majority said that their immediate circle had already been international, some said that internationality was reflected in their immediate circle in fairly diverse ways. These ways were mostly related to an interest towards the destination country, region, language and culture emerging in the immediate circle. Many of those who had completed a traineeship also reported that the interest towards the destination country had remained – for example, their parents still followed what was happening in South America or India. During long periods of traineeship, friends often came to visit the destination country and became interested in international traineeship themselves. It should be noted that often the immediate circle is already international, for which reason the impact may not be so significant. On the other hand, there were very positive descriptions of strong, life-changing effects – often the trainee had even found a spouse in the destination country.

## IMPACTS DESCRIBED BY TRAINEES:

“I have encouraged my family and friends to do international traineeships based on my good experience. My advice has worked...”

“My earlier experiences abroad have inspired my family and friends to stay abroad for longer periods of time.”

“My immediate circle was already international. My experience may have made it even more open towards different cultures.”

“At the moment, I work in Germany and my family lives here.” “My sister now has foreign trainees working on her farm.”

“I am sure that my parents would never have gone to Russia if I had not been there. Through my traineeship, they have learned about Russia and its culture and have learned to know Russian people.”

“People in my immediate circle warned me about the destination country. To my delight, I have noticed afterwards that my family and friends now have a different attitude towards foreigners – they are much less prejudiced.”

“My mother was horrified when I told her I was going to go to India. After my traineeship, she found the courage to visit the country with me. This has helped my immediate circle understand people from different backgrounds.”

“My sister came for a visit when I was doing my traineeship and is still there. Through our experience, our family has learned a lot about Africa – they are more open.”

## 4.2. Higher education institutions

A total of 22 people and 21 higher education institutions (HEIs) responded to the survey directed to higher education institutions. Of them, 8 were universities and 13 universities of applied sciences. The questionnaire was supplemented with 7 theme interviews (4 universities and 3 universities of applied sciences).

### **CIMO's international trainee programmes are an important addition for higher education institutions**

The importance of international trainee programmes for HEIs has been compiled to Table 4. According to the survey and the supplementary theme interviews, CIMO's trainee programmes were considered to be an important addition to the international traineeships offered by the HEI. The supplementary nature of the programmes was especially due to the availability of placements in countries outside the EU. It was also felt that CIMO's international traineeship programmes carried 'the label of good quality'. CIMO was regarded as a well-known and reliable operator. According to HEIs, the good quality of the content and workplaces of the traineeships was a special feature of CIMO's programmes. In addition, the fact that the workplaces had already had trainees before was seen as an important 'factor reducing risks'.



In addition to CIMO's programmes, the available international traineeships in HEIs were distributed between the following forms of international traineeships:

- Placement found by the student (often supported by a grant awarded by the HEI)
- Bilateral agreements with workplaces abroad
- Other programmes (Erasmus+ being the most important one)
- Placements are also available through international co-operation between HEIs
- Agreements with organisations/companies that supply placements
- Placement offered by an employer directly (also paid traineeships)

The average of answers to the other statements describing the importance of CIMO's traineeship programmes varied between 2 and 3. The average was 3 or higher in the following statements: widen the selection of destination countries (3.0), widen the selection of international training placements (3.32) and speed up studies of students who participated. The clarification of students' career choices (2.91), linking the traineeship to a larger part of the student's studies (e.g. study paths) (2.73), providing ECTS credits for the international traineeship (2.41), speed up studies (2.36) and international working life partnerships (2.09) were found somewhat important. Answers from representatives of universities (overall average: 2.56) were all slightly more critical compared to the answers from representatives of universities of applied sciences (overall average 3.00). The biggest difference concerned the statement 'new international working life partnerships': universities of applied sciences (2.54) and universities (1.44) and "Linking the traineeship to a larger part of the student's studies, e.g. study paths, links to the thesis process, etc." (universities of applied sciences 3.31 and universities 2.56).

**TABLE 4. IMPORTANCE OF CIMO'S INTERNATIONAL TRAINEE PROGRAMMES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

Supplement the selection of other international traineeships offered by us	3.55
Widen the selection of destination countries	3.00
Widen the selection of international training placements	3.32
New international working life partnerships for our higher education institution	2.09
Providing ECTS credits for students who have completed an international traineeship	2.41
Speed up studies of who participated	2.36
Stronger learning motivation of students who participated	3.00
Linking the traineeship to a larger part of the student's studies, e.g. study paths, links to the thesis process, etc.	2.73
Clarification of career choices among those of our students who participated	2.91
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.82</b>

When responses were examined by field of study, respondents reported special importance in the following fields:

- Business
- Communication
- Nursing care
- Social welfare and healthcare
- Arts management
- Humanities and social sciences

The importance for international working life partnerships remained the lowest compared to other areas. This impression was strengthened by the answers to the open-ended question, with the majority stating that no contacts had so far been established. On the other hand, a lack of information was also visible in the responses. Many of the respondents did not know whether possible contacts had been formed.

Respondents were also asked to explain the possible effects that they had identified on students. This information had not been systematically collected, but the following effects had been identified:

- Awakening internationalisation, clarification and even improvement of career prospects
- Positive experiences among students: students had reported that seeing a different working and professional culture had broadened their minds.

All HEIs that responded reported that they marketed CIMO's international traineeship programmes. Their forms of operation included:

- Placing a notice to the intranet and sending it to students' emails.
- A representative of CIMO had been asked to introduce the programmes
- Briefings on traineeships and/or international traineeships
- Personal guidance
- Electronic channels in the HEI's careers services
- Facebook page
- Communication of information as part of the internationalisation week

In connection with the theme interview, a more accurate picture was built of how international traineeships can be linked to studies. The practices varied between the HEIs. Respondents emphasised the importance of the content of the work related to the traineeship to make it possible to obtain ECTS credits. A sufficiently academic level of the traineeship makes the provision of credits possible in the university sector. Therefore, it was suggested that the work tasks should be compiled into projects creating clear, independent entities so that the learning taking place in them could be identified and acknowledged. Some of the HEIs encouraged students to link their thesis to the traineeship. In addition, some HEIs had encouraged students to complete study units (e.g. literature exams) during their traineeship.

### **Whole capacity not exploited at the moment – practices vary and information is difficult to find**

The theme interviews and surveys revealed that there was considerable variation in HEIs' practices related to international traineeships as regards collecting information, monitoring, marketing and awarding credits. Therefore, information on the impact of CIMO's traineeship programmes on students' academic success and study attainments could not be found or the persons responsible for international affairs did not have the information (e.g. the faculty had the information). Many HEIs noted that the development of the organisation and statistical recording of international traineeships and guidance counselling were under preparation. The number of ECTS credits awarded for an international traineeship and the related practices also varied between HEIs. Development of practices and sharing best practices was recommended. For example, it was recommended that the impact of international traineeship on academic success and a successful career be monitored. Unified practices in recording the numbers of international traineeships would enable comparability, development of

practices related to international traineeships and assessment of the societal impact. In addition, contacts with the workplaces in which traineeships were completed did not seem to be developed systematically to build long-term partnerships. Some good practices in international traineeships that were gathered from the interviews include:

- *long-term monitoring of students' work careers by career services*
- *'What did you learn from international traineeship' events for students for sharing experiences*
- *blogs and participation in marketing by those who have completed a placement*
- *more specific guidelines for ECTS credits awarded for traineeships – at least minimum levels*
- *students are a resource when they return to Finland – this could be used e.g. in education export projects*

Students' responses reflected the variation in practices to integrate traineeship and studying:

*"The traineeship speeded up my studies: I was awarded credits for the traineeship and found a topic for my master's thesis from the country where I did my traineeship."*

*"Considerably slowed down work on my thesis."*

*"The international traineeship was towards the end of my studies – it had no effect."*

*"A motivating effect."*

*"Thanks to the traineeship, I was able to complete my master's thesis in the company."*

*"Work on my master's thesis was an integral part of my traineeship."*

*"I successfully managed to collect material for my dissertation."*

*"The impact was marginal – I only received 6 credits for a six-month traineeship."*

*"A significant impact – all the content of my studies was related to global, complex phenomena: I found whole new perspectives, was able to make observations and got to see things in practice."*

*"I finished my thesis off during the traineeship."*

### **4.3. Workplaces**

Eighty-five representatives or contact persons from workplaces<sup>3</sup> from a total of 47 countries and all continents responded to the survey directed to workplaces. The respondents represented all programme types. The survey was supplemented with 8 theme interviews.

CIMO's international trainees provide identifiable added value for workplaces

CIMO's international trainees provide identifiable added value for workplaces (overall average 3.93 on a scale of 1-5) (Table 5). According to the respondents, the most significant

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3 The term workplace is used to refer to workplaces that have received trainees from CIMO's international trainee programmes.

added value comes from the extra resource for workforce (4.6). In addition, trainees are a significant added value at the workplaces as they provide an understanding of the younger generations entering working life (4.35). A medium strong impact is visible in the following matters that provide added value: new ideas for the development of the work (3.98), fresh ideas for the working culture (3.79), recruitment of new employees (3.65), the latest professional expertise (3.62) and new ideas for the development of services (3.54). In the country programmes, the added value described by the respondents was slightly higher in statements concerning new ideas (new ideas for the development and fresh ideas for the working culture: average in both higher than 4).

**TABLE 5. ADDED VALUE PROVIDED FOR THE WORKPLACE BY INTERNATIONAL TRAINEES**

An additional resource for workforce	4.60
The latest professional expertise	3.62
New ideas for the development of work	3.98
New ideas for the development of services	3.54
Fresh ideas for the working culture	3.79
Understanding of younger generations in working life	4.35
Possibility to recruit	3.65
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.93</b>

## General added value related to programmes at medium level

Participation in CIMO's programmes and the general added value provided by the participation was seen as slightly lower (average 2.89) (Table 6). Respondents were asked to estimate the added value in the following matters: new networks and partners from Finland (2.99), the possibility to develop CIMO's traineeship programmes (2.99) and the opportunity to network with other providers of training placements (2.69). It has to be noted that the view the representatives of the country programmes had on the general added value was somewhat higher in networking (3.33), but considerably higher in the statement "Possibility to develop CIMO's programmes" (3.83). The opportunity to have a say in the development of the programmes before changes were made was considered extremely important. Networking was hoped for especially for sharing best practices in e.g. traineeship guidance practices. During the interview, a few interviewees reflected on the strengthening of trainees' contacts with their own HEIs, but no initiatives had yet been made in this direction.

**TABLE 6. ADDITIONAL VALUE FOR THE WORKPLACE FROM PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAMME**

New networks and partners from Finland	2.99
Possibility to develop CIMO's programmes	2.99
Possibility to network with other providers of training placements	2.69
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.89</b>

## Workplaces happy with trainees' competence and motivation

When workplaces were asked about their point of view on possible differences between the trainees of CIMO's programmes and trainees of other programmes, the most common answer was the excellent competence, motivation and language skills of CIMO's trainees. This was the case when the workplace also had other international trainees. The respondents did not see big differences between Erasmus+ trainees and CIMO's trainees. The trainees in CIMO's programmes were slightly more advanced in their studies or recent graduates, which resulted in differences between competences, for example. It is also worth noting that only one respondent reported that their trainee had no motivation for the traineeship and apparently had only taken part in the traineeship programme to be able to travel to the destination country. On the other hand, based on their previous experience, many respondents actually praised the trainee from CIMO's programme saying that the trainee "was like one of our own employees", the trainee was "very competent and motivated" or that the "trainee brought a breath of fresh air to our work community".

## Placements also provide opportunities for development

Respondents were also asked how the workplace had supported the trainee's professional or international competences. Almost all respondents described ways to support the trainee's development. The forms of support described most were related to sufficient and well-implemented induction to work, working and the daily guidance related to it, and giving regular feedback. It was considered that challenging duties were the best way to support the development of the trainee's competence. The development was also supported by encouraging the trainee to apply his/her development ideas in his/her work, which enabled the trainee to test the idea in practice. Several respondents emphasised the importance of listening to the trainee and the importance of the training plan and the definition of the job description drawn up together with the trainee.

It was considered important to include the trainee in the work community like any of the permanent employees. One respondent noted: "We encourage our trainees to be innovative, keen to participate and proactive." Several respondents felt that it was a good idea to reflect on the gradual professional development during the traineeship. As the traineeship progressed, the student could be directed to carry out more demanding and independent duties. Independent entities and projects were seen as a good form of development. In addition to learning at work, several workplaces offered the trainee the opportunity to participate in personnel training events. One workplace described the forms of competence development in the following way:

1. Broad-based duties
2. Interaction with several stakeholder organisations during the traineeship (expanding the perspective)
3. Independent areas of responsibility (the trainee is regarded as an expert, not only as a trainee)
4. Cultural experiences
5. Allocation of challenging work duties
6. Opportunity to take part in different meetings, seminars and events

International skills were seen to develop best through diverse interaction during the traineeship. Language skills and communication skills were seen to develop through working and in interaction with different actors. In the theme interviews, the interviewees brought up the trainees' extremely good communication skills (especially social media). In some of the workplaces, it was possible to participate in courses provided in the language of the destination country. The development of cultural understanding was seen to be more widely related to free time as well as to work.

## 5. POINTS OF VIEW ON THE SOCIETAL IMPACT – INTERNATIONAL COMPETENCES AND FINLAND'S AMBASSADORS ABROAD

The impact assessment showed that CIMO's international trainee programmes provided **the selection of traineeships in HEIs with clear added value, in particular brought additional resources to workplaces** and provided a new understanding of new generations in working life. From the point of view of trainees, especially their **international competences, courage and professional language skills increased**. From the point of view of society, those more than 2,000 trainees from the period examined in the report are now engaged in working life. A large number of the trainees who responded to the survey (see Chapter 4.1) had worked abroad during their careers or were currently working abroad.

**In Finnish organisations outside Finland**, trainees from these programmes were seen as ambassadors of **today's Finland** ensuring they had up-to-date knowledge of Finland and the Finnish language. In the **workplaces abroad**, Finnish trainees provided a glimpse of one of the most successful countries in the world and its young people. For example, this was seen to encourage young people in developing countries to study, improve their language skills and work hard in order to achieve a goal. Traineeship programmes thus have **a role in identifying the change in working life and identifying competence needs**. An impact can be identified, but more work should be done to strengthen it. The contribution of trainees in the organisation in which they completed their traineeship was considerable. For workplaces, the additional resource provided by the trainee was extremely significant.

Several impact elements can be identified in the importance of international traineeship **regarding the student's studies**: motivation, topics of theses, experiences and observations related to the student's field of study were some examples of the positive effects. However, a large number of students said that there was no impact or that their studies may have slowed down. **Work should be done to enhance the positive impact**. The methods of information collection should be developed as there was no accurate information on students' academic performance available in HEIs. On the whole, the entire potential of international traineeships was not yet fully taken advantage of in the higher education sector. From the point of view of the societal impact, the speeding up of studies, increased study motivation and finding employment were matters to which attention should be paid.

## 6. IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS BY TARGET GROUP

The key suggestions for improvement presented by the target groups have been compiled to this section:

### **Students who had completed a traineeship made the following suggestions for improvement:**

- Providing language and cultural training from the point of view of the traineeship: good ways to start a conversation, information on the working culture, work practices and experiences
- Information about the selection criteria, why was I picked: the information would be valuable regarding job searches and the student's own development
- The logic of job search and the operating model for the selection process
- Transparency of the application process, selection and assessment information is important
- Familiarisation with the work duties in advance (e.g. through Skype)
- Independent areas of responsibility in work duties, responsible duties (projects)
- Additional information about the workplace in advance – now the interview was not until I was in the destination country and I was told about the work duties then – advance contact is needed
- There is no continuum at the moment: meetings for CIMO's international trainees
- Proper job description
- The importance of a testimonial must be taken into account: instructions for employers
- Co-operation agreement between the trainee and the workplace (at least in certain countries, this would make guidance, induction, etc. more systematic)

### **Representatives of the workplaces made the following suggestions for improvement:**

- Improving the induction: confirmation of advance information about the content of work to the student, advance interviews/ meeting with the workplace if needed (e.g. Skype)
- Attention to be paid to the social skills required of the trainee and their development
- Possible continuation of the traineeship
- Now the time elapsing between the traineeship application and the beginning of the actual traineeship feels long
- All trainees should possess social media skills
- We would like feedback to be able to improve the job descriptions: the impact strengthens when processes are improved
- We would like more choice regarding the applicants (now only 1–3 applicants to choose from)
- The application process feels quite bureaucratic and rigid (e.g. 2 application periods at fixed times)
- Taking into account the higher cost of living in expensive areas / cities in the sizes of grants
- Preselection for the placements is not transparent



**Representatives of higher education institutions made the following suggestions for improvement:**

- The choice of destinations outside Europe could be further increased
- Joint promotion events organised by CIMO and the HEI
- Traineeships to be offered e.g. in the field of technology
- More diversity in the alternatives
- Ensuring the flow of information: information about how successful traineeships are or whether students from our HEI have been selected to them (currently, the information is only provided when the application period starts)
- The comparability of the content of the work and the student's competence must be ensured – from so-called general placements to occupation-specific placements
- Close co-operation with HEIs - impact reports and studies
- A format for an assessment of the traineeship for employers: this would support the provision of ECTS credits for the traineeship
- Flexibility in application periods – the current model of two application periods is not compatible with all degree programmes
- A “starter package” for the trainee (a support package for students advising how to make use of their competences)
- Clear application forms – is it too formal as it is?

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

CIMO's international trainee programmes are an important addition to the traineeships available in the higher education sector. Several representatives of HEIs noted that the focus is gradually shifting from exchange studies to traineeship, but that the practices have not been able to keep up with this development. Students still note far too often that their traineeship had no impact on their studies, although they learn and acquire strong international competences during the traineeship. A special feature of CIMO's traineeship programmes is that they are profiled as programmes for fairly competent trainees: the traineeships are mainly completed towards the end of studies or when the student has just graduated. This provides the programmes with a distinct "brand" of their own.

### *Programmes are popular and their quality is considered to be high.*

The practices and the implementation of the programmes have been improved and the programmes are popular and their quality is considered to be high. They attract students very successfully. Competition is strong and the best applicants are selected. This **label of quality should be strengthened** and now is a good time to create a brand for the programmes, as they are administrated by the new Finnish National Agency for Education and its international services.

The workplaces unanimously hoped that the programmes would be continued. At the same time, hopes were expressed for a more transparent application process and opportunities for the workplaces to take part in the development of the programmes. In addition, the application practices should be looked at together with the workplaces in the future.

### *Students' international competence has strengthened significantly during the traineeship.*

Students' international competence has strengthened significantly during the traineeship. In this assessment, the framework of hidden competence was for the first time applied from the point of view of the impact of trainee exchanges. All forms of hidden competence – productivity, curiosity and resilience – were strengthened during international traineeships. In addition to this, the impact on courage and language skills was strong. Professional competence also improved in all programmes. This competence should be identified and acknowledged in HEIs in order to ensure that there are positive effects on studies. The benefits of international traineeships for workplaces should be communicated to employers – people who have completed an international traineeship have a huge competence potential of which workplaces can take advantage.

CIMO's trainees are also ambassadors of the Finnish language and culture. Through trainees, Finnish organisations can refresh their knowledge of Finnish, today's Finland and working methods. Foreign organisations see trainees as a fresh new wind of expertise from a northern country like Finland, providing an example of how useful it is to travel and learn languages and an insight into Finnish working methods and working culture. A key result in

the impact assessment was related to the fact that, as regards workplaces, developing the content of the work was considered important. Trainees find work projects and independent areas of responsibility meaningful and, on the other hand, HEIs note that it is significantly easier to provide credits for such work than for general, often routine-like work duties that remain the same from day to day.

As a whole, CIMO's international traineeship programmes serve a purpose among the available international traineeships. Finland's hard-working and confident experts abroad are the most important proof of that.

# APPENDICES AND BACKGROUND MATERIAL

## Appendices:

- Email invitations and Webropol surveys
- Theme interview questions

## Background materials:

- CIMO's mobility statistics
- Reports on international traineeships
- Process descriptions of CIMO's international trainee programmes

## APPENDIX 1 – EMAIL INVITATION AND QUESTIONNAIRE FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAINEES

Dear recipient,

You have previously completed one of CIMO's international traineeships. We are carrying out an impact assessment of international traineeship programmes and hope that you will be able to find the time to answer the following questions. Please reflect for a moment on the effects of the international traineeship on yourself and your career, your family and friends, and your competence.

The survey will take about 10 minutes to complete. All answers are confidential and will be grouped in the report. The details of individual respondents will not be revealed in the assessment report. The impact is also assessed with the help of theme interviews. If you are interested in participating in the interview, please provide your contact details at the end of the survey.

Submit your answers by Thursday, 27 October 2016.

Link to the questionnaire:

<https://www.webropolsurveys.com/SZF89E2F49FE4AC13D.par>

Additional information about the impact assessment.

Lauri Tuomi, Profitmakers Oy, lauri.tuomiraprofitmakers.fi

Marjaana Kopperi, CIMO, marjaana.kopperi@cimo.fi

Thank you for your participation!

Kind regards, Tarja Nousiainen

Survey for participants of CIMO's international traineeships. If you have completed several international traineeships organised by CIMO, you can respond to the survey several times.

Background variables:

Last name

First name

Age (age groups)

Gender

The latest degree you have completed

Possible other degree(s)

Your field of study (you can choose several)

In which year did you start your international traineeship?

The destination country of your international traineeship

Workplace of international traineeship

Description of the workplace during international traineeship

Three most important/most recent workplaces after your traineeship that have matched your career targets:

1 Employer:                      Task:

2 Employer:                      Task:

3 Employer:                      Task:

Please reflect on the international traineeship organised by CIMO that you completed and consider the possible impact it had on your studies, career, competence, etc.:

1. What kind of impact has the international traineeship had on your career? (1 minor impact, 5 significant impact)

- |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| • finding employment in your own field                                 |  |  |  |  |  |
| • I learned new skills that played an important role when I found work |  |  |  |  |  |
| • knowledge of the destination country or region                       |  |  |  |  |  |
| • professional networks formed through the traineeship                 |  |  |  |  |  |
| • improvement of professional language skills                          |  |  |  |  |  |

2. What kind of professional competence do you think you acquired during the international traineeship?

3. What kind of impact did the international traineeship have on the progress of your studies and your learning results?
4. What kind of impact do you think your international traineeship had on the following competences and operating methods? (on the scale of 1 minor impact, 5 significant impact)
  - a. Productivity 1   2   3   4   5
  - b. Analytical ability
  - c. Problem-solving skills
  - d. Reliability
  - e. Tolerance
  - f. Interest towards new issues
  - g. Understanding of other cultures
  - h. Co-operation skills
  - i. Adaptation
  - j. Networking skills
  - k. Self-knowledge
  - l. Resilience
  - m. Courage
  - n. General language skills
5. What kind of impact has the destination country of your international traineeship and its culture had on you?
6. Do you recognise any effects your traineeship may have had on the internationality of your immediate circle (family members, friends, close relatives, etc.)? What kind of effects can you recognise?
7. Are you interested in taking part in a theme interview as part of the assessment of CIMO's international trainee programmes?

## APPENDIX 2 – EMAIL INVITATION AND A QUESTIONNAIRE FOR WORKPLACES

Dear Sir/Madam,

Greetings from Finland! CIMO, Centre for International Mobility, is providing international trainee opportunities for Finnish higher education students and recent graduates. Your organisation has provided training placements for the trainees coming through CIMO.

In order to evaluate the trainee programmes we would appreciate your opinion by the 14<sup>th</sup> of December 2016.

Questionnaire:

<https://www.webpolsurveys.com/SZ54BB209340BEE494.par>

Further information regarding the programmes: Marjaana Kopperi (Marjaana.kopperi@cimo.fi) and on the evaluation: Dr. Lauri Tuomi, lauri.tuomi@profitmakers.fi

Questionnaire to host organisations of CIMO Internship Programmes

1. Background questions First name

Surname

Position

Organisation

Country

Questions

2. Think about your overall participation as a provider of training placements for trainees coming from Finland through CIMO. What kind of added value has this participation given to your organisation?

1=low added value, 5=high added value

New networks or partners in Finland (e.g. higher education institutes or organisations)

Possibility to develop CIMO's training programmes

Possibility to network with other providers of training placements



## Questions

3. Think about the trainees coming from Finland through CIMO who have been working in your organisation. What kind of added value have they brought to your organisation?

1=low added value, 5=high added value

Extra resource for the workforce

The latest professional knowledge

New ideas for the development of the work

New ideas for the development of your services

Fresh ideas for your working culture or for the working culture at your office

New understanding on the younger generations in working life

Possibility to recruit qualified employees

4. If you compare trainees coming through CIMO with other trainees you have had at your organisation: are there any differences between the trainees (e.g. attitude, competencies, motivation and language skills)?
5. How your organisation has supported the development of the trainees' professional or international skills during the traineeship?
6. How should CIMO's training programmes be developed in the future?

Thank you!

## APPENDIX 3 – EMAIL INVITATION AND QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Dear recipient,

CIMO offers its own international trainee programmes. The selection of these programmes has been modified and developed over the years as new opportunities, such as the Erasmus traineeship, have become available.

Our intention is to investigate the importance and impact of CIMO's own, nationally funded programmes and how they compare with other traineeships, for example, those offered by higher education institutions themselves.

Because the questions cover several theme areas, please use the views of other experts in your higher education institution if the theme in the question or statement is not related to your tasks.

Please respond to the below survey by 30 November 2016.

Questionnaire: <https://www.webropolsurveys.com/SZ22493CF1C8716766.par>

The results of the assessment will be used to develop the programmes and the results will be ready in February 2016.

Marjaana Kopperi will provide more information about CIMO's international trainee programmes and Lauri Tuomi, DSc (Econ & BusAdmin), from Profitmakers Oy about the assessment.

Thank you in advance!

CIMO

Marjaana Kopperi

Background variables

1. Recipient

First name

Last name

E-mail

2. Position

Choose the alternative that best describes your position

Coordinator, international affairs

Manager, international affairs

Other, please specify. Provide additional information in question 3.

3. Provide additional information to question 2 about your position "Other, please specify".

4. Unit

Choose the alternative that best describes the unit.

International services in the higher education institution

Career and recruitment services or similar

International services in the faculty or field of study

Other unit, please specify Provide additional information in question 5.

5. Provide additional information to question 4 about your unit "Other unit, please specify".

6. Higher education institution

Questions

7. Estimate the importance of CIMO' international trainee programmes to your higher education institution

1= low importance, 5= high importance

Supplement the selection of other international traineeships offered by us

Widen the selection of destination countries

Widen the selection of international training placements

New international working life partnerships for our higher education institution

Providing ECTS credits for students who have completed an international traineeship

Speed up studies of who participated

Stronger study motivation among students who participated

Linking the traineeship to a larger part of the student's studies, e.g. study paths, links to the thesis process, etc.

Clarification of career choices among those of our students who participated

A few more detailed questions:

8. How important are CIMO's trainee programmes as a part of the other international traineeships available in your higher education institution? When you think, for example, about the available training placements, the applicability of the content of the traineeship (meeting the learning objectives) for the students in your higher education institution, the duration of the traineeship, the destination countries available, the size of the grant, etc., how would you estimate the importance of CIMO's traineeships, in particular?
9. What kind of international trainee programmes of its own does your higher education institution offer?
10. What fields of education have benefited from CIMO's trainee programmes in particular?
11. What kind of possible new international contacts with working life have CIMO's trainee programmes opened to your higher education institution?
12. What possible impacts of having completed a traineeship can be identified in your students? Studies have speeded up or slowed down, finding employment, clarification of career perspectives, etc.
13. How have you marketed CIMO's international trainee programmes to students?
14. How could CIMO's international trainee programmes be improved in future to strengthen their impact?

Thank you for your response!

Submit

## APPENDIX 4 – THEME INTERVIEW FOR TRAINEES

The impact of CIMO's international trainee programmes

### THEME INTERVIEW FOR PARTICIPANTS OF TRAINEE PROGRAMMES

Background variables:

Last name

First name

Destination country of trainee exchange, task:

8. What kind of impact has the international traineeship had on your career, including professional competence (efficiency)?
  
9. What kind of impact did the international traineeship have on the progress of your studies and your learning results?
  
10. What kind of impact has the destination country of the international traineeship and its culture had on you?
  
11. Do you recognise any effects your traineeship may have had on the internationality of your immediate circle (family, friends, close relatives, etc.)? What kind of effects can you recognise?
  
12. What kind of issues should be paid attention to in order to improve CIMO's international programmes?

## APPENDIX 5 – THEME INTERVIEW FOR WORKPLACES

The impact of CIMO's international trainee programmes

THEME INTERVIEW for workplaces on the impact of CIMO's international trainee programmes

Name:

Position:

Organization:

Country:

(Finland, CIMO's programmes)

themes

1. The trainees and the added value?
2. Overall participation - What kind of added value has this participation given to your organisation?
3. If you compare the trainees coming from the CIMO's programmes with participants of other programmes: are there any differences between the trainees (e.g. attitude, competencies, motivation, and language skills)?
4. How CIMO's training placement programmes should be developed in the future?

## APPENDIX 5 - THEME INTERVIEW FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

The impact of CIMO's international trainee programmes

Theme interview for higher education institutions on the impact of CIMO's international trainee programmes

Name:

Position:

Higher education institution:

Themes of discussion

1. What is the importance of CIMO's trainee programmes (e.g. available grants / programmes, destination countries, unpaid/ paid traineeship, length of traineeship) as part of the other international traineeships available in your higher education institution?
2. What kind of international trainee programmes of its own does your higher education institution offer?
3. What kind of possible new international contacts with working life has the programme opened for your higher education institution?
4. What kind of possible effects of having completed a traineeship can be identified in your students? (speeding up/slowing down of studies, finding employment, clearer career perspectives, etc.)
5. How have you marketed CIMO's international trainee programmes to students?
6. How could CIMO's international trainee programmes be improved in future to strengthen their impact?

Online  
ISBN 978-952-13-6375-7  
ISSN 1798-8926