INKEY

WP3 TOOLKIT

IN-KEY – Inclusive worK Experiences for Young Professionals
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WORK PACKAGE 3

Toolkit for Inclusive Internships Guidelines, tools and recommendations for host companies

From willingness to readiness: practical steps before, during and after an inclusive internship

A Toolkit for companies and organisations that want to make internships more accessible, structured and inclusive.

LEAD PARTNER: PER FORMARE SRL
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Introduction – Why Inclusive Internships Matter

1. The INKEY Project

INKEY is an Erasmus+ project aimed at improving access to meaningful and inclusive internship opportunities for young people with disabilities and other young people facing barriers or fewer opportunities.

Internships can represent an important bridge between education, training and employment. They allow young people to apply their knowledge in a real working environment, develop technical and transversal skills, gain confidence and become more familiar with professional roles and expectations. However, these opportunities are not equally accessible to everyone.

Young people may encounter barriers related to disability, health conditions, economic disadvantage, social circumstances, educational difficulties, discrimination, geographical isolation, cultural or linguistic background, migration experience or limited access to professional networks. These barriers may affect their ability to find an internship, participate fully in the experience or receive the support needed to complete it successfully.

At the same time, many organisations are interested in becoming more inclusive but do not always know where to begin. They may lack practical guidance, trained mentors, accessible procedures, financial resources or established partnerships with education and training providers. In other cases, inclusive practices exist but remain informal, depend on individual staff members and are not integrated into organisational procedures.

INKEY addresses this gap by working on both sides of the internship experience: the needs and expectations of young people and the readiness of organisations.

The project combines:

- research on barriers, needs and existing inclusive practices;

- consultation with young people, education and training providers and other stakeholders;

- a survey mapping the readiness of organisations to host interns with fewer opportunities and a specific research addressed to students with an overview of their specific needs;

- practical guidance and tools for organisations and interns;

- capacity-building activities for company staff, tutors and mentors;

- the development of an Inclusive Internship Quality Label.

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The project follows a progressive pathway:

Evidence from young people and existing practices → Organisational readiness assessment → Practical Toolkit → Capacity building → Quality recognition

This Toolkit translates the evidence collected through the project into concrete actions that organisations can implement before, during and after an internship. It is not intended only for organisations that already have advanced diversity and inclusion policies. It is also designed for small and medium-sized organisations that may be at the beginning of their inclusion journey.

The objective is not to impose one rigid model. Organisations differ in size, sector, structure and available resources. Instead, the Toolkit offers flexible guidance, practical templates and different levels of action that can be adapted to each organisational context.

2. Why Inclusivity Matters in Internships

An internship should be more than the temporary presence of a young person in a workplace. It should be a structured learning experience in which the intern is given meaningful tasks, clear learning objectives, appropriate supervision, regular feedback and a genuine opportunity to participate in organisational life.

An internship becomes inclusive when barriers to access, participation, learning and professional development are anticipated, identified and addressed.

Inclusion does not mean treating every intern in exactly the same way. Equal treatment may still produce unequal results when individuals start from different situations or face different barriers. Inclusive practice therefore involves providing each person with the conditions and support needed to participate on an equitable basis.

This may include:

- accessible recruitment and selection procedures;

- clear and inclusive communication;

- reasonable physical, digital or organisational adaptations;

- flexible ways of carrying out tasks;

- structured onboarding;

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- trained mentors or workplace tutors;

- regular opportunities to discuss progress and support needs;

- fair and transparent assessment;

- protection from discrimination, stigma and exclusion.

Inclusive internships should not be based on assumptions. Two people who appear to face similar barriers may have very different needs, preferences and capabilities. The intern should therefore be involved in decisions concerning accessibility, adaptations, communication and support.

The purpose of inclusion is not to lower professional standards or remove meaningful responsibilities. It is to remove unnecessary barriers so that interns can demonstrate their abilities, develop new competences and contribute to the organisation.

From access to meaningful participation

Offering an internship place is only the first step. An organisation may recruit an intern with fewer opportunities but still fail to provide an inclusive experience. For example, an intern may technically have access to the workplace but:

- receive information in an inaccessible format;

- be assigned unclear or repetitive tasks;

- be excluded from team meetings;

- lack a designated mentor;

- be afraid to disclose difficulties or request support;

- receive feedback only when a problem occurs;

- be assessed without considering agreed adaptations;

- experience isolation during remote or hybrid work.

For this reason, INKEY considers inclusion throughout the entire internship cycle:

1. preparation and recruitment;

2. accessibility and internship design;

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3. onboarding;

4. mentoring and support;

5. monitoring and feedback;

6. final evaluation and organisational learning.

Inclusion as a shared responsibility

Inclusive internships are not the responsibility of the intern alone, nor should they depend exclusively on one particularly motivated mentor.

They require cooperation between:

- organisational management;

- human resources or administrative staff;

- workplace mentors and tutors;

- colleagues and team members;

- education and training providers;

- employment, disability or social support services, where relevant;

- the intern.

Management commitment is especially important. Without clear responsibilities and organisational support, inclusive practices can remain occasional and fragile. A mentor may be willing to help but may not have sufficient time, training or authority to introduce the necessary adaptations.

An inclusive approach therefore combines individual support with organisational preparation.

Inclusion benefits everyone

Many measures introduced to support interns with fewer opportunities also improve the internship experience for all participants.

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Clear instructions, accessible documents, structured onboarding, regular feedback and flexible communication are not useful only for people with recognised support needs. They help all interns understand their role, reduce uncertainty and participate more effectively.

Inclusive design can therefore improve the overall quality of internship programmes rather than creating a separate system for a limited group of people.

3. Connection with Erasmus+ Priorities

Erasmus+ is the European Union programme supporting education, training, youth and sport. The Programme promotes opportunities for personal, educational and professional development and supports cooperation and innovation among organisations.

The Erasmus+ Programme is guided by four horizontal priorities:

1. Inclusion and diversity

2. Digital transformation

3. Environment and the fight against climate change

4. Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement

The INKEY project is primarily connected with the priority of **inclusion and diversity** but this area is closely connected to the others, for the creation of accessible and fair opportunities of training and work to everyone. Erasmus+ seeks to promote equal opportunities, access, inclusion, diversity and fairness across all its actions. Organisations are expected to design activities that are accessible to a diverse range of participants and to pay particular attention to people facing barriers that may limit their participation.

The Programme recognises that people may face fewer opportunities because of disability, health problems, educational difficulties, cultural differences, social or economic barriers, discrimination or geographical obstacles. Inclusion is therefore understood broadly and cannot be reduced to one target group or one type of disadvantage.

INKEY contributes to this priority by supporting organisations to move from general willingness to practical implementation. It helps them identify barriers, review their procedures and introduce more accessible and equitable internship practices.

The project also contributes to other Erasmus+ priorities in different ways.

Digital transformation

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Digital tools are increasingly used in recruitment, onboarding, communication, training, supervision and remote or hybrid internships. However, digitalisation does not automatically produce inclusion.

Online application forms, documents, platforms or communication tools may create additional barriers when they are not accessible or when interns do not have adequate digital skills, devices, connectivity or support.

This reflects the Erasmus+ objective of improving digital readiness, resilience and capacity while ensuring that digital transformation supports equitable participation.

Participation and common European values

A meaningful internship allows young people to participate more actively in economic and social life. It can strengthen their autonomy, confidence, professional identity and sense of belonging.

Inclusive workplaces also contribute to European values such as respect for human dignity, equality, non-discrimination, human rights, solidarity, participation, respect for diversity.

By creating fairer routes into employment, inclusive internships can support young people who are often underrepresented in workplaces and decision-making environments.

Environmental sustainability

Environmental sustainability is not the primary focus of INKEY, but inclusive internship planning can also support more sustainable organisational practices. For example, organisations may use digital documents where accessible and appropriate, reduce unnecessary travel even providing remote or hybrid participation where this responds to both accessibility and environmental needs, use local support networks, integrate sustainable workplace practices into internship activities. Environmental and inclusion objectives should be considered together. A remote solution may reduce travel and improve access for some interns, but it may exclude others who lack adequate technology, accessible software or a suitable home-working environment. Sustainable choices must therefore also be inclusive choices.

4. Benefits for Interns and Organisations

Inclusive internships should not be considered charitable activities. They are professional learning opportunities that can generate value for interns, organisations and the wider community.

Benefits for interns: for young people with fewer opportunities, an inclusive internship can provide:

- ✓ Practical work experience: Interns can apply knowledge and skills in a real organisational context and better understand workplace expectations, responsibilities and routines.

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- ✓ Development of professional competences: Internships support the development of both technical and transversal skills, including: communication, teamwork, problem-solving, time management, adaptability, digital competence, professional behaviour, self-organisation.
- ✓ Increased confidence and autonomy: A supportive workplace can help young people recognise their abilities, make informed professional choices and develop greater independence.
- ✓ Improved employability: Relevant work experience can strengthen a curriculum vitae, provide professional references and help interns demonstrate their competences to future employers.
- ✓ Access to networks: Internships allow young people to establish relationships with colleagues, mentors, employers and professionals who may support their future education or employment pathways.
- ✓ Greater understanding of personal support needs. An internship can help young people identify the conditions in which they work most effectively, the adaptations they may need and how to communicate these needs professionally.
- ✓ A stronger sense of belonging. Being included in a team and recognised for one's contribution can reduce isolation and strengthen participation in professional and community life.

However, these benefits cannot be taken for granted. A poorly designed internship may instead reinforce insecurity, exclusion or negative expectations. Quality, accessibility and appropriate support are therefore essential.

Benefits for organisations: enterprises and organisations can also gain significant benefits from hosting interns through an inclusive approach.

- ✓ Access to a wider talent pool. Inclusive recruitment allows organisations to reach candidates who may be overlooked by traditional selection methods but who possess relevant skills, motivation and potential.
- ✓ New perspectives and ideas: people with different experiences can contribute alternative perspectives, identify overlooked barriers and support innovation in services, products and internal processes.
- ✓ Stronger organisational culture. Inclusive internships encourage staff to reflect on communication, teamwork, accessibility and management practices. This can improve the workplace environment for employees as well as interns.
- ✓ Development of mentoring and leadership skills for the staff members, strengthening their ability to: communicate clearly, set objectives, provide feedback, manage diverse teams, recognise different learning styles, address problems constructively.
- ✓ Improved accessibility: adaptations introduced for an intern may produce lasting improvements in physical spaces, digital systems, internal documents and organisational procedures.

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- ✓ Greater staff awareness. Direct experience can help challenge stereotypes and reduce uncertainty about disability, disadvantage and diversity.
- ✓ Stronger partnerships
- ✓ Inclusive internship programmes can create new cooperation opportunities with schools; labour agencies, vocational education and training providers; universities; employment services; disability organisations; social services; local authorities; civil society organisations.
- ✓ Contribution to social responsibility. Providing equitable access to work-based learning demonstrates a concrete commitment to inclusion, equal opportunity and community development.
- ✓ Preparation for a diverse workforce and customer base. Organisations operate in increasingly diverse societies. Experience in inclusive internship management can improve their capacity to recruit, support and retain diverse employees and to respond to the needs of different customers and service users.
- ✓ Organisational learning and innovation: interns can help organisations review established practices and recognise procedures that are unnecessarily complex, inaccessible or inflexible.

Mutual benefit rather than one-way support

The relationship between an organisation and an intern should be based on mutual benefit.

While the organisation provides a safe and accessible learning environment, meaningful tasks, supervision and feedback, opportunities to develop both professional and transversal skills, fair recognition of the intern's contribution, the intern provides: time and commitment, skills and knowledge, new ideas, different perspectives, active participation in organisational activities.

This perspective helps avoid portraying interns with fewer opportunities only as recipients of support. They are learners, colleagues and contributors with individual abilities, interests and professional ambitions.

5. Moving from Good Intentions to Inclusive Practice

Many organisations support the principle of inclusion. The challenge is turning this positive intention into consistent practice.

Good intentions alone do not guarantee that recruitment information is accessible, the staff know how to discuss support, mentors are trained, adaptation are introduced and all the procedures are implemented. Inclusive internships require preparation, clear responsibilities and practical tools. They also require organisations to accept that readiness is a process.

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An organisation does not need to have every possible solution in place before hosting an intern with fewer opportunities. It should, however, be willing to improve its practices.

The following chapters provide guidance for each stage of this process. They support organisations in understanding their current level of readiness, introducing achievable improvements and creating internship experiences in which all young people have a fair opportunity to learn, participate and contribute.

The Toolkit will use a three-level approach so that organisations can enter the process at different stages of readiness and move gradually from awareness to implementation and recognition.

1. LEARN Understand inclusion	**2. ACT** Implement inclusive practices	**3. ASSESS & IMPROVE** Measure readiness and progress

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Part 1 – Understanding Inclusive Internships

1.Who are interns with fewer opportunities? Definition of 'fewer opportunities' and inclusion (not only disabilities, but other factors, socio economic barriers, different backgrounds, language barriers etc)

The expression **"interns with fewer opportunities"** refers to young people who may encounter barriers that make it more difficult to access, participate in or successfully complete an internship. It does not describe a fixed category of people and should never be used as a label defining a person's identity, abilities or potential.

Disability is one possible source of barriers, but it is not the only one. Fewer opportunities may also result from economic disadvantage, limited access to education or professional networks, geographical isolation, health conditions, family or caring responsibilities, migration experience, discrimination, cultural differences or limited knowledge of the language used in the workplace. Young people may also face barriers because of their ethnic or social background, gender identity, religion, age, educational pathway or previous experience of exclusion.

In many cases, different barriers overlap. For example, a young person may face both financial difficulties and language barriers, or may have a disability while also living in an area with limited transport connections. The impact of these circumstances depends not only on the individual but also on the environment. A condition becomes a serious obstacle when recruitment procedures, communication methods, digital systems, working arrangements or organisational attitudes are unable to respond to different needs.

For this reason, inclusive internships should not begin by asking what is "wrong" with the intern. They should begin by identifying which aspects of the internship may prevent full participation and what reasonable changes could remove those barriers.

Inclusion means creating conditions in which people with different backgrounds and needs can access the same opportunities, participate meaningfully and be recognised for their contribution. It does not mean treating everyone identically. Giving everyone exactly the same conditions may appear fair, but it can preserve existing inequalities. An inclusive approach may therefore require different forms of support, such as accessible information, adapted selection methods, flexible working arrangements, language assistance, task clarification, assistive technology or more structured mentoring.

The support needed should be discussed with the intern rather than assumed in advance. Two people facing apparently similar circumstances may have different preferences, abilities and support needs. The intern should be treated as an active participant in the planning of the experience, not as a passive recipient of assistance.

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2.Common misconceptions and stereotypes

Misconceptions about interns with fewer opportunities can influence recruitment decisions, the quality of assigned tasks and relationships within the workplace. They may operate openly, but they are often based on unconscious expectations.

One frequent assumption is that an inclusive internship will necessarily require expensive adaptations or specialist knowledge. In reality, many effective adjustments are simple and low-cost. Clear instructions, flexible communication, accessible documents, regular check-ins and a well-prepared mentor can make a significant difference without requiring major organisational investment.

Another misconception is that interns with fewer opportunities will need constant supervision or will be less productive. Support needs vary considerably, and the need for an adaptation does not indicate a lack of competence. Many difficulties arise not because an intern cannot perform a task, but because the task has not been explained clearly, the working environment is inaccessible or expectations have not been agreed in advance.

There may also be a fear that adapting a task or selection process means lowering standards. Inclusion does not require organisations to remove meaningful learning objectives or professional responsibilities. It requires them to distinguish between essential requirements and unnecessary barriers. Allowing additional time in an interview, offering an alternative communication format or adapting how a task is completed does not necessarily change the expected result.

A further stereotype is that people belonging to a particular group will all need the same support. Disability, migration background, economic disadvantage or language barriers do not produce one standard profile. Making decisions based on categories rather than individual conversations can lead organisations either to provide unsuitable support or to underestimate a person's autonomy.

The INKEY survey shows that organisations themselves recognise challenges related to limited D&I experience, communication barriers, task adaptation, mentoring time and concerns about performance. These concerns should not simply be dismissed, but addressed through clear procedures, basic training and cooperation with external support organisations. The survey also found that 94.4% of respondents were willing or conditionally willing to host INKEY interns. This suggests that resistance to inclusion is not the main issue; the more common problem is uncertainty about how to translate willingness into effective practice.

An inclusive workplace therefore creates space for questions without allowing uncertainty to become an excuse for exclusion. Staff do not need to be experts in every form of disadvantage. They need to be willing to listen, communicate respectfully, seek advice and adapt their approach when necessary.

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3.Benefits of diversity and inclusion for organisations (innovation, retention, employer branding, internationalisation)

Diversity refers to the presence of people with different identities, experiences, perspectives and backgrounds. Inclusion concerns the extent to which those people are able to participate, influence decisions, develop their skills and feel that their contribution is valued.

Diversity alone does not automatically produce positive results. An organisation may recruit people from different backgrounds while maintaining procedures or behaviours that prevent them from participating fully. The benefits emerge when diversity is supported by an inclusive culture.

Inclusive internships can contribute to **innovation** by bringing new perspectives into the organisation. Interns may question established routines, identify accessibility problems that have previously gone unnoticed and suggest different ways of communicating with customers, users or colleagues. Teams that are open to diverse perspectives are better placed to understand complex problems and develop solutions for a broader range of people.

Inclusion can also support **retention**. Interns and employees are more likely to remain engaged when expectations are clear, communication is respectful and support is available. Inclusive internship practices can therefore act as a testing ground for wider improvements in onboarding, mentoring, staff development and wellbeing. Measures such as structured feedback, accessible information and flexible communication are beneficial not only for interns with specific needs, but for the entire workforce.

A credible commitment to inclusion can strengthen **employer branding**. Young people, employees, customers and partner organisations increasingly pay attention to how organisations translate their stated values into practice. Hosting inclusive internships can demonstrate social responsibility, but only when the experience is meaningful and not used merely as a communication exercise. Authentic employer branding is built through consistent practices, positive participant experiences and evidence of improvement.

Diversity and inclusion may also strengthen **internationalisation**. Organisations working across European or international contexts need to communicate with people from different linguistic, cultural and educational backgrounds. Inclusive internships help teams develop intercultural competence, flexibility and awareness of different communication styles. These capacities can improve cooperation with international partners, mobility participants, customers and communities.

The WP3 report confirms that D&I can support recruitment and retention, organisational reputation, innovation, problem-solving, wellbeing and fairness. However, these benefits are most likely to emerge when inclusion is supported by leadership, practical policies, resources and monitoring rather than isolated initiatives.

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4.Inclusive mindset and organisational culture

An inclusive mindset begins with the recognition that people do not need to fit one standard profile in order to contribute effectively. It involves curiosity instead of assumption, flexibility instead of rigid standardisation and attention to individual strengths rather than exclusive focus on perceived limitations.

At organisational level, this mindset must be reflected in everyday behaviour. Inclusion is visible in how internship vacancies are written, how candidates are interviewed, how new interns are introduced to the team, how tasks are assigned and how feedback is provided. It is also visible in whether interns feel safe asking for clarification, reporting a difficulty or requesting an adaptation without fearing that they will be judged as unsuitable.

The INKEY survey identified strong or full management support for D&I in 83.1% of responding organisations. This is an important foundation. However, only 29.6% reported having a D&I focal point or a specific metric connected to inclusion, while 59.2% had either a formal policy or informal guidance. The overall Inclusive Internship Readiness Score was 48.8 out of 100, corresponding to the Developing Readiness level. These results reveal a clear gap between positive commitment and structured implementation.

An inclusive culture cannot therefore rely only on supportive declarations from management or the goodwill of an individual mentor. Responsibilities need to be clear, staff need basic guidance and interns need to know whom they can contact. Organisations should also review what happened during each internship and use feedback to improve future experiences.

This does not mean that every organisation needs a large D&I department or a complex policy framework. The INKEY sample is mainly composed of micro and small organisations, which may have fewer specialised resources but can also offer flexibility, closer relationships and more personalised support. For these organisations, an inclusive culture may begin with a short internal commitment, one designated contact person, a prepared mentor, regular check-ins and a simple method for recording feedback.

The essential step is to move from inclusion as a general value to inclusion as a shared organisational practice. This Toolkit supports that transition by providing practical guidance that organisations can adapt to their size, sector and current level of readiness.

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Part 2 – Before the Internship

Inclusive internships begin well before the intern's first working day. Recruitment methods, internal communication, accessibility, task planning and the choice of a mentor all influence whether the experience will be genuinely inclusive.

The INKEY survey shows that organisational willingness is often stronger than operational preparation. While management support is generally high, only 46.5% of organisations reported adapted recruitment procedures, 38.0% used specific outreach channels, 50.7% provided inclusive onboarding measures and 31.0% confirmed that their digital systems were accessible. Structured mentoring was present in only 29.6% of organisations. These findings indicate that organisations need simple procedures that transform positive intentions into practical preparation.

1."How to" preparing the organization. Checklist format (easy to implement)

Preparing the organisation does not require predicting every possible need or creating a complex D&I system. It means establishing a minimum structure before recruitment begins.

The organisation should first identify who is responsible for the internship, what tasks the intern will carry out, which team will be involved and what resources may be needed. Responsibilities should not remain implicit. Even in a small organisation, there should be one person responsible for coordinating the internship and one person providing day-to-day support.

The internship role should also be reviewed before it is advertised. Tasks should be meaningful, connected to learning objectives and realistic within the available time. Essential requirements should be distinguished from traditional or unnecessary requirements that may exclude suitable candidates. For example, physical presence every day, a driving licence or perfect command of the local language should only be requested when genuinely necessary.

Organisational Preparation Checklist

The checklist should be completed before publishing the internship opportunity and reviewed again once the selected intern's individual needs are known.

Check	Action
☐	Management has approved the internship and supports its inclusive approach.

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☐	An internship coordinator or responsible contact person has been identified.
☐	A mentor or tutor has been selected and has sufficient time for the role.
☐	The hosting team has been informed about the internship.
☐	Meaningful tasks and learning objectives have been defined.
☐	Essential and non-essential role requirements have been distinguished.
☐	Possible physical, digital, communication and organisational barriers have been reviewed.
☐	A procedure for discussing individual support needs has been agreed.
☐	Available internal resources and possible external support services have been identified.
☐	A simple process for reporting and resolving difficulties has been established.

2.Internal communication and awareness

Inclusive internships are more effective when the whole hosting team understands their purpose. Staff do not need detailed personal or medical information about the intern, but they should know that the organisation is committed to providing a respectful and accessible learning experience.

Before the internship begins, the coordinator should explain the objectives of the placement, clarify the responsibilities of the mentor and colleagues and communicate the expected standards of behaviour. The conversation should emphasise respect, confidentiality and the avoidance of assumptions.

Information concerning a disability, health condition, economic situation, migration background or other personal circumstances must only be shared when necessary, with the intern's knowledge and in accordance with data-protection requirements. Inclusion does not mean discussing a person's private circumstances with the whole team.

A brief awareness session may be sufficient, particularly in a small organisation. It can address how to communicate clearly, provide constructive feedback, avoid stereotypes and respond when an intern requests clarification or support. This is particularly relevant because only 14.1% of organisations in the INKEY survey reported providing regular D&I training.

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Internal Communication Checklist

Check	Action
☐	The team understands the purpose and learning objectives of the internship.
☐	The roles of the coordinator, mentor and colleagues have been explained.
☐	Staff have received basic guidance on inclusive communication.
☐	Confidentiality and data protection have been discussed.
☐	The team knows whom to contact if a difficulty arises.
☐	The intern will be introduced as a contributing team member, not as a “special case”.

3.Assigning mentors and tutors

A mentor or workplace tutor is one of the most important elements of an inclusive internship. The mentor provides guidance, explains tasks, monitors progress and acts as the intern’s main point of contact.

The INKEY survey found that informal support was relatively common, but structured mentoring was much less widespread. Informal goodwill can be valuable, but it may become inconsistent when expectations, time and responsibilities are not clearly defined.

The mentor should understand the work assigned to the intern, be available for regular contact and have sufficient authority to resolve minor issues or request adaptations. The role should not automatically be given to the most senior employee. A suitable mentor is someone who communicates clearly, listens without judgement, provides constructive feedback and is willing to adapt their approach.

Where possible, the organisation may also appoint a **buddy**. Unlike the mentor, the buddy provides informal support with everyday workplace routines, such as introductions, breaks, meetings and team interaction. In smaller organisations, the same person may perform both functions, provided the responsibilities remain clear.

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The mentor is not expected to act as a therapist, social worker or disability specialist. When a need goes beyond the mentor's role, support should be requested from the internship coordinator, sending institution or relevant external service.

Mentor and Tutor Checklist

Check	Action
☐	The mentor has voluntarily accepted the role.
☐	The mentor understands the internship tasks and learning objectives.
☐	Time for supervision and regular check-ins has been included in the workload.
☐	The mentor has received basic information or training on inclusive support.
☐	The mentor knows which issues can be handled directly and which should be escalated.
☐	A backup contact has been appointed for absences.
☐	The intern will receive the mentor's contact details before or on the first day.
☐	The first meeting and the initial review dates have already been planned.

4.Inclusive recruitment and communication

Inclusive recruitment begins with the wording and distribution of the internship opportunity. Candidates cannot apply for opportunities they cannot find, understand or access.

The vacancy should use clear language, describe the main tasks and distinguish essential requirements from desirable ones. Organisations should avoid vague expressions such as "perfect fit", "high-pressure personality" or "excellent physical condition" unless they refer to a genuine requirement of the role.

The announcement should state that candidates can request adjustments during recruitment and the internship. This can make candidates feel safer in communicating their needs and demonstrates that support requests will not automatically disadvantage them.

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A simple statement may be used:

We welcome applications from candidates with different backgrounds and experiences. Adjustments to the application, selection process or internship can be discussed upon request.

The opportunity should be shared through a range of channels. In addition to mainstream platforms, organisations may cooperate with universities, vocational education providers, employment services, youth organisations, disability organisations, migrant-support services, NGOs and Erasmus networks. This responds directly to the WP3 finding that only 38.0% of organisations used targeted channels to reach candidates with fewer opportunities.

Selection methods should also be flexible. Depending on the candidate's needs, an organisation might offer additional time, provide interview questions in advance, use accessible online platforms or allow a written rather than oral response. The purpose is not to reduce the expected standard, but to ensure that the selection process measures relevant competences rather than unrelated barriers.

Inclusive Recruitment Checklist

Check	Action
☐	The vacancy uses clear, respectful and accessible language.
☐	Tasks, working conditions and learning objectives are explained.
☐	Only genuinely essential requirements are listed as mandatory.
☐	The vacancy includes a statement about available adjustments.
☐	Candidates are given a clear contact person for accessibility requests.
☐	The opportunity is shared through mainstream and targeted channels.
☐	Application documents and online forms are digitally accessible.
☐	Alternative application or interview formats can be offered.
☐	Interviewers focus on skills and potential rather than assumptions about personal circumstances.
☐	Personal information is collected only when relevant and handled confidentially.

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5.Accessibility preparation (physical, digital, organisational)

Accessibility is not limited to ramps, lifts or accessible toilets. It also includes digital tools, communication methods, working schedules, task organisation and the social environment.

The WP3 report identifies accessibility and reasonable accommodation as critical operational areas. Physical accessibility was more developed than digital and sensory accessibility, while many organisations were uncertain whether their websites, platforms or internal tools could be used with assistive technologies.

Accessibility should be reviewed proactively, but the organisation should not assume that every intern belonging to a particular group will require the same adaptations. Once a candidate has been selected, the organisation should arrange a confidential conversation to ask what would enable the person to participate effectively.

A useful question is: "**Is there anything concerning the workplace, communication, schedule, technology or tasks that we should adapt to support your participation?"**

The conversation should focus on practical needs rather than diagnoses or personal details that are not relevant to the internship.

Physical Accessibility

The organisation should consider entry routes, doors, lifts, toilets, workstations, meeting rooms, emergency procedures and transport connections. Where full physical accessibility cannot immediately be achieved, alternative spaces, remote participation or other reasonable solutions should be explored.

Digital and Communication Accessibility

Websites, application forms, documents and internal platforms should be readable, clearly structured and compatible, where possible, with assistive technologies. Videos may require captions, images may need alternative text and meetings may require written summaries or accessible materials.

Language accessibility should also be considered. Interns with a different linguistic background may benefit from plain language, written instructions, visual examples, glossaries or additional time to process complex information.

Organisational Accessibility

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Organisational barriers may include rigid schedules, unclear instructions, frequent last-minute changes, excessive noise, inaccessible remote-working practices or tasks that can only be completed in one fixed way.

Reasonable adjustments may include flexible hours, task sequencing, additional breaks, quiet workspaces, remote or hybrid arrangements, simplified communication or the division of complex activities into clearer stages.

Accessibility Preparation Checklist

Area	**Check**
Physical	☐ The intern can enter and move through the relevant workspaces.
Physical	☐ Toilets, meeting rooms and emergency procedures have been reviewed.
Digital	☐ Application forms, documents and work platforms are accessible or alternatives are available.
Digital	☐ Videos, images and online meetings include appropriate accessibility measures where needed.
Communication	☐ Instructions can be provided in different formats or plain language.
Communication	☐ Language or interpretation support can be explored where necessary.
Organisational	☐ Working hours and task arrangements allow reasonable flexibility.
Organisational	☐ A quiet space, remote option or adapted workstation can be considered.
Individual needs	☐ A confidential support-needs conversation has been scheduled.
Follow-up	☐ Agreed adaptations will be documented and reviewed with the intern.

Accessibility is not a one-time inspection. Some barriers only become visible when the internship begins, so adaptations should be reviewed throughout the experience.

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6.Checklist before hosting an intern

Before confirming that the organisation is ready, the coordinator should complete the following final check.

Ready to Host?

Check	Final verification
☐	The internship has clear and meaningful learning objectives.
☐	Tasks are appropriate, realistic and adaptable where necessary.
☐	A coordinator and a mentor have been formally appointed.
☐	The mentor has sufficient time and basic guidance.
☐	The hosting team has been informed and prepared.
☐	Recruitment and selection procedures are accessible.
☐	Candidates can request adjustments without being disadvantaged.
☐	Physical, digital, communication and organisational accessibility have been reviewed.
☐	A confidential conversation on individual support needs is planned.
☐	The organisation knows which external services or partners may provide support.
☐	The intern will receive clear pre-arrival information.
☐	The first-day and first-week programme have been prepared.
☐	Regular mentor–intern check-ins have been scheduled.
☐	A reporting and problem-escalation procedure is available.

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☐	The organisation is prepared to review and adjust arrangements during the internship.

An organisation does not need to answer “yes” to every possible accessibility scenario before hosting an inclusive internship. It should, however, be able to demonstrate that responsibilities are clear, barriers have been considered, communication is open and appropriate solutions will be identified together with the intern.

This practical approach reflects the central conclusion of the INKEY WP3 report: many organisations are willing to host interns with fewer opportunities, but they need straightforward tools, structured guidance and access to support in order to move from willingness to effective inclusive practice.

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Part 3 – During the Internship

The quality of an inclusive internship depends largely on what happens after the intern enters the organisation. Accessibility measures agreed before the placement must be translated into everyday support, meaningful tasks, clear communication and opportunities to participate in the life of the team.

The INKEY survey shows that many organisations already provide some form of support, but this is often informal: 52.1% reported informal support for interns, while only 29.6% had structured mentoring arrangements. Monitoring is also limited, with only 26.8% using climate or inclusion surveys or specific D&I indicators. At the same time, flexible working hours and remote or hybrid arrangements are relatively widespread, creating a useful basis on which more structured inclusive practices can be built. The priority is therefore not to create heavy procedures, but to make support clearer, more consistent and easier to evaluate.

1. How to Support Interns Effectively

Effective support begins with an individual and strengths-based approach. The intern should be recognised as a learner and a contributing member of the organisation, not only as a person who may require assistance.

At the beginning of the placement, the mentor and intern should review the internship objectives, expected tasks, working arrangements, communication preferences and any agreed adaptations. Expectations should be clear, but they should also remain flexible enough to respond to the intern's learning pace and circumstances.

Instructions should be concrete and proportionate. Complex tasks may be divided into stages, supported by examples or explained in different formats. However, support should not become overprotection. Interns need the opportunity to try, make decisions, ask questions and gradually develop greater autonomy.

Effective support generally combines four elements: meaningful work, accessible conditions, regular guidance and increasing independence. The aim is not to remove every challenge, but to ensure that challenges are connected to learning rather than created by avoidable barriers.

Tasks and support arrangements should be reviewed during the internship. An adaptation that appeared suitable before the placement may need to be changed once the intern has gained experience or when new responsibilities are introduced.

2. Mentoring and Supervision

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The mentor or workplace tutor is the main reference person for the intern. Their role is to explain tasks, support learning, monitor progress, provide feedback and help resolve everyday difficulties.

A structured mentoring relationship does not need to be complex. At minimum, the organisation should establish a named mentor, planned meetings, clear learning objectives and a process for recording important decisions or adaptations.

The mentor should be available and approachable, but should not become the intern's only connection with the organisation. Colleagues and managers should also contribute to inclusion by involving the intern in relevant activities and treating them as part of the team.

Where possible, mentoring may be complemented by a **buddy system**. The mentor focuses on learning, performance and professional development, while the buddy helps the intern understand informal routines, social practices and everyday workplace life.

The distinction between mentoring and supervision should also be clear. Supervision concerns the quality, safety and completion of the work. Mentoring has a broader developmental function and helps the intern reflect on learning, confidence and future professional goals. In small organisations, both functions may be performed by the same person, but adequate time should still be allocated to each.

A practical mentoring routine may include a short weekly meeting, an intermediate review and a final evaluation. During these meetings, the mentor should ask not only whether tasks have been completed, but also whether instructions, tools, relationships and working arrangements remain appropriate.

The WP3 report identifies structured mentoring, tutor role descriptions, buddy systems, regular check-ins and basic training as central actions for improving organisational readiness. This responds directly to the gap between the widespread willingness to provide support and the limited presence of formal mentoring systems.

3. Building Psychological Safety and Wellbeing

Psychological safety means that the intern feels able to ask questions, acknowledge mistakes, express uncertainty and request support without fear of humiliation or negative judgement.

This is especially important for young people who have had limited previous exposure to professional environments or who may have experienced discrimination, exclusion or low expectations. An intern who does not feel safe may hide difficulties until they become serious, avoid asking for clarification or agree to arrangements that are not working.

Psychological safety is built through everyday behaviour. Mentors should respond calmly to questions, provide feedback privately and avoid making the intern feel that reasonable support is an inconvenience.

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Mistakes should be treated as part of learning, provided that safety and professional standards are respected.

The organisation should also make clear that discrimination, harassment and non-inclusive behaviour are not acceptable. The intern must know whom to contact if the issue involves their mentor or immediate supervisor. A reporting channel is not genuinely safe when the only person available is also the person concerned by the complaint.

Personal information should remain confidential. The intern should not be required to disclose a diagnosis, family situation or other private details beyond what is necessary to agree appropriate support.

A psychologically safe environment does not mean avoiding all difficult conversations. Performance concerns, missed deadlines or inappropriate behaviour should still be addressed, but in a fair and constructive way. The organisation should distinguish between a lack of effort, a learning need and a barrier that requires adaptation.

4. Managing Communication and Integration

Clear communication is one of the simplest and most effective inclusion measures. At the beginning of the internship, the mentor should ask how the intern prefers to receive information and feedback. Some people may prefer written instructions, visual examples or time to prepare before meetings; others may work better through verbal explanations or practical demonstrations.

Important information should not depend exclusively on informal conversations. Tasks, deadlines and changes should be confirmed in an accessible format, particularly when the intern faces language, attention, memory or communication barriers.

Plain language should be used where possible, without becoming childish or patronising. Technical terminology and workplace acronyms should be explained, especially for interns entering a professional environment for the first time or working in a second language.

Integration also requires active participation. The intern should be introduced to colleagues, invited to relevant meetings and included in appropriate team activities. However, participation should remain meaningful. Inviting an intern to every meeting without explaining its purpose is not inclusion.

Colleagues should know what contribution the intern is expected to make and how they can support the experience. At the same time, the intern should not be expected to represent or educate others about an entire social, cultural or disability group.

5. Regular Check-ins and Feedback

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Regular check-ins allow the organisation to identify difficulties early and adjust the internship before problems become more serious. They also create a predictable space in which the intern can ask questions that they may hesitate to raise during daily work.

During the first weeks, a brief weekly meeting is recommended. Once the internship is established, meetings may become less frequent, depending on its duration and the intern's level of autonomy. Check-ins should be scheduled in advance rather than taking place only when something goes wrong.

A simple check-in can be organised around five questions:

Area	**Suggested question**
Progress	What has gone well since our last meeting?
Learning	What have you learned or practised?
Barriers	Has anything made your work unnecessarily difficult?
Support	Do any instructions, tools or arrangements need to be changed?
Next steps	What will you work on before the next meeting?

Feedback should be specific, timely and connected to agreed objectives. Statements such as "be more professional" or "improve your communication" are too vague to guide improvement. The mentor should explain what happened, why it matters and what the intern can do differently.

Positive feedback is equally important. Interns need to understand which skills and behaviours they should continue developing, not only what needs correction.

The intern should also be invited to give feedback on the organisation. A genuinely inclusive internship is a two-way learning process: the intern is developing professionally, while the organisation is learning how effectively its procedures work in practice.

6. Supporting Emotional Wellbeing

Internships can generate stress, particularly for young people entering an unfamiliar environment, communicating in another language or managing previous experiences of exclusion. Workload, uncertainty and fear of making mistakes may also affect wellbeing.

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The mentor should pay attention to significant changes in behaviour, attendance, communication or participation. These signs should not immediately be interpreted as poor motivation. A private conversation may reveal unclear expectations, excessive workload, inaccessible arrangements, interpersonal difficulties or circumstances outside the workplace.

A useful starting question is: **I have noticed that something may have become more difficult recently. Is there anything concerning the tasks, working environment or support arrangements that we should review?**

The organisation should listen and respond within its role. Mentors can offer practical support, flexibility and referral to appropriate services, but they are not expected to diagnose or provide psychological treatment. Where specialised support is needed, the intern may be directed to the sending institution, healthcare services, counselling services or another appropriate professional resource.

Any immediate risk to the intern or others should be managed through the organisation's existing safety and emergency procedures.

7. Remote and Hybrid Internship Inclusion

Remote and hybrid arrangements can remove barriers related to transport, geography, disability, economic circumstances, study commitments or caring responsibilities. The INKEY report includes examples showing how flexible attendance and continuous guidance can enable participation without requiring major financial investment.

However, remote work is not automatically inclusive. It may create new difficulties when the intern lacks suitable equipment, a stable connection, an accessible platform, a quiet workspace or regular contact with colleagues.

Before remote work begins, the organisation should confirm that the intern has access to the required technology and understands how communication, supervision and task reporting will operate. Digital tools should be accessible, and alternative formats should be available when necessary.

Remote interns should have scheduled contact with their mentor and opportunities to interact with the wider team. They should receive the same information, learning opportunities and feedback as interns working on site. Meetings should have a clear purpose and relevant materials should be shared in advance.

Performance should be assessed on agreed outputs and learning objectives rather than constant online visibility. Flexibility does not mean the absence of structure: working hours, availability, response expectations and deadlines should be agreed clearly.

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Hybrid arrangements should also be reviewed from the intern's perspective. Requiring attendance only for informal social activities while all meaningful tasks take place remotely may still leave the intern excluded from professional learning.

8. Managing Challenges and Conflict Resolution

Challenges are normal in any internship. They may concern performance, communication, relationships, attendance, workload, accessibility or differences in expectations. The aim is not to eliminate every difficulty, but to address it early and fairly.

When a problem arises, the mentor should first clarify what happened and listen to the intern's perspective. The issue should then be compared with the agreed tasks, objectives and support arrangements. This helps distinguish between a performance problem, a misunderstanding, an unmet learning need or an unresolved accessibility barrier.

A simple resolution process can follow five steps:

1. **Identify the issue** using specific facts rather than assumptions.
2. **Listen to the people involved**, separately where appropriate.
3. **Review agreed expectations and adaptations.**
4. **Agree actions, responsibilities and a review date.**
5. **Escalate the issue** when it cannot be resolved at mentoring level.

Actions should be documented briefly, particularly when they concern changes to tasks, working arrangements, accessibility or performance expectations.

The intern should always know how to raise a concern outside the immediate mentoring relationship. More serious matters involving discrimination, harassment, safety or repeated misconduct must follow the organisation's formal procedures.

Ending an internship should normally be considered only after reasonable efforts have been made to understand and address the situation. Inclusion does not remove accountability, but accountability must be based on fair expectations and accessible conditions.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

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Monitoring helps the organisation determine whether the internship is accessible, supportive and educationally meaningful. It should not become an administrative burden or a system for collecting unnecessary personal data.

The INKEY survey highlights monitoring and continuous improvement as one of the weakest areas of organisational readiness. Many organisations rely on individual initiatives rather than a structured cycle of planning, implementation, feedback and improvement. The WP3 report therefore recommends simple monitoring tools, including intern feedback forms, mentor checklists, basic indicators and periodic reviews.

Monitoring should combine quantitative information with qualitative feedback. Numbers may show whether meetings took place or objectives were completed, but conversations explain why an arrangement worked or failed.

Suggested Inclusive Internship KPIs

The following indicators are proposed as a practical starting set. The suggested targets are **Toolkit recommendations**, not results from the WP3 survey, and should be adapted to the size, sector and experience of each organisation.

KPI	How to measure it	Suggested target	Frequency
Mentor assignment rate	Interns with a named mentor before the first day	100%	Start of internship
Inclusive onboarding completion	Required onboarding actions completed	100%	First week
Check-in completion rate	Meetings completed compared with meetings planned	At least 80%	Monthly
Learning objective progress	Objectives achieved or progressing as planned	At least 75%	Mid-term and final
Adaptation response time	Working days between a support request and an agreed response	Within 5 working days	As required

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Participation and integration	Intern participation in relevant meetings and team activities	Appropriate to role and schedule	Monthly
Intern inclusion score	Average rating on safety, belonging, support and accessibility	At least 4 out of 5	Mid-term and final
Mentor satisfaction score	Mentor rating of guidance, resources and organisational support	At least 4 out of 5	Final
Issue resolution rate	Reported issues resolved or supported by an agreed action plan	At least 80%	Monthly/final
Internship completion rate	Internships completed as planned or concluded through an agreed positive transition	At least 85%	Annual

Targets should not be interpreted mechanically. For example, a lower completion rate may reflect personal or external circumstances rather than an organisational failure. Each quantitative result should therefore be reviewed together with the intern's and mentor's feedback.

Organisations should collect only the information they need and protect confidentiality. In small samples, detailed personal data may make individuals identifiable even when names are removed. Monitoring should focus on the quality of procedures and experiences rather than collecting sensitive information for its own sake.

Minimum Monitoring Record

For each internship, the organisation should retain a simple record containing the learning objectives, mentor appointment, agreed adaptations, completed check-ins, mid-term review, final feedback and any improvement actions.

These documents can also provide evidence for the future INKEY Quality Label. The purpose is not to reward organisations for producing paperwork, but to demonstrate that inclusion is planned, implemented, reviewed and improved rather than left entirely to informal goodwill.

By introducing this light monitoring cycle, organisations can gradually move from isolated supportive actions towards a more consistent and sustainable inclusive internship model.

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Part 4 – After the Internship

The end of an internship should not be considered simply as the end of a placement. It is an important moment for recognising learning, collecting evidence, understanding what worked and identifying what should be improved before the next internship.

For the organisation, this final phase turns an individual experience into organisational learning. For the intern, it provides recognition, constructive feedback and the opportunity to reflect on skills, achievements and possible future pathways.

The INKEY approach therefore encourages organisations to close every internship with a simple cycle:

Collect feedback → Review results → Evaluate impact → Identify improvements → Explore future opportunities

This process does not require a complex evaluation system. A short final meeting, structured feedback forms and a limited number of indicators can already provide useful evidence for improving future internships.

1. Collecting Feedback from Interns and Mentors

Feedback should be collected from both the intern and the mentor because the two perspectives provide different but complementary information.

The intern can provide direct evidence about accessibility, communication, mentoring, workload, team integration, psychological safety and the usefulness of the learning experience. The mentor can evaluate progress towards learning objectives, the effectiveness of support arrangements, the adequacy of organisational resources and the overall management of the placement.

Whenever possible, feedback should include both a short rating scale and open questions. Numbers make it easier to compare experiences over time, while comments help explain why a practice worked or why a difficulty occurred.

A final feedback process should explore five main areas:

Area	Key question
Learning	Were the internship objectives and expected competences achieved?

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Support	Was mentoring regular, accessible and appropriate?
Inclusion	Did the intern feel respected, safe and part of the team?
Accessibility	Were agreed adjustments effective and were new barriers identified?
Overall experience	What should the organisation maintain or change in future internships?

Feedback should be confidential and used primarily for improvement rather than individual judgement.

The final meeting should also give the intern an opportunity to discuss achievements, difficulties and future aspirations. This conversation can help transform the experience into a clearer professional development pathway.

2. Report of the Monitoring Activity

At the end of each internship, the organisation should prepare a short Monitoring Summary Report.

This does not need to be a long administrative document. Its purpose is to bring together the main evidence collected before and during the internship and provide a concise picture of the quality of the experience.

The report may include:

Internship Information

Organisation: _____
Internship role: _____
Internship period: _____
Mentor: _____
Coordinator: _____

Monitoring Summary

Monitoring area	Main evidence / result	Remarks

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Learning objectives		
Mentor meetings and check-ins		
Accessibility and adaptations		
Team participation and integration		
Challenges identified		
Actions taken		
Intern feedback		
Mentor feedback		
Final outcomes		

The organisation should conclude the report with three short questions:

What worked particularly well?

What barriers or difficulties emerged?

What should be changed before the next internship?

The monitoring report can become part of the organisation's evidence base for the INKEY self-assessment and future Quality Label.

3. Evaluating Impact and Satisfaction

Monitoring tells the organisation what happened. Evaluation helps understand whether the internship produced the expected results.

The final evaluation should consider outcomes for both the intern and the organisation.

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For interns, relevant outcomes may include progress in professional and transversal competences, confidence, autonomy, employability, workplace participation and achievement of learning objectives.

For organisations, the internship may contribute to improved mentoring capacity, greater staff awareness, more accessible procedures, stronger cooperation with external organisations and increased confidence in hosting interns with fewer opportunities.

A small number of clearly defined indicators is preferable to a complex monitoring system that organisations are unlikely to use consistently.

Suggested Final Internship KPIs

The following indicators complement those proposed in Part 3. The targets are Toolkit recommendations and not WP3 survey results and may be adapted according to organisational size and internship characteristics.

KPI	How to measure it	Suggested target
Intern satisfaction score	Average final rating of the overall internship experience	≥ 4/5
Intern inclusion score	Average rating of belonging, respect, accessibility and psychological safety	≥ 4/5
Mentor satisfaction score	Final mentor rating of organisational support and internship management	≥ 4/5
Learning objective achievement	Objectives achieved or substantially progressed	≥ 75%
Internship completion rate	Internships completed as planned or through an agreed positive transition	≥ 85%
Issue resolution rate	Reported issues resolved or supported by an agreed action plan	≥ 80%
Adaptation effectiveness	Agreed adaptations considered effective by the intern	≥ 80%
Improvement action rate	Identified improvement actions assigned to a responsible person and deadline	100%

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Future opportunity rate	Interns offered employment, further learning, networking or continued collaboration where appropriate	To be monitored annually

Indicators should always be interpreted together with qualitative feedback. For example, an internship that ends early should not automatically be considered unsuccessful. The reason may relate to personal circumstances, a positive transition to employment or another external factor.

The purpose of evaluation is therefore not to produce a perfect score but to understand the experience and support better decisions in the future.

4. Continuous Improvement Process

An inclusive internship programme becomes sustainable when organisations use experience to improve the next placement.

The INKEY WP3 findings show that many organisations demonstrate positive attitudes and willingness but have less structured systems for monitoring and continuous improvement. Closing this gap requires a simple process that can be repeated after every internship.

The organisation can use the following four-step cycle:

1. Review

Analyse feedback, monitoring records and KPI results.

2. Prioritise

Identify the most important gaps. Priority should be given to barriers affecting accessibility, safety, learning or equal participation.

3. Improve

Define realistic actions, responsibilities and deadlines.

4. Reassess

Review whether the change has been implemented and repeat the INKEY Self-Assessment periodically.

Post-Internship Improvement Plan

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Improvement identified	Action required	Responsible person	Deadline	Evidence

Improvements do not always require substantial financial investment. They may involve rewriting a vacancy, preparing an onboarding document, providing basic mentor training, changing a communication procedure or scheduling regular check-ins.

The important point is that lessons learned should not remain only in the memory of the individual mentor. They should become part of the organisation's procedures and future internship planning.

Over time, this process allows organisations to move gradually through the INKEY readiness levels, from informal practices towards structured, monitored and transferable inclusive internship systems.

5. Retention and Future Collaboration Opportunities

The end of the internship can also be the beginning of a new professional relationship.

When an intern has developed relevant competences and there is an organisational need, the company should consider whether employment, an additional learning experience or another form of collaboration may be possible.

Retention should not be considered the only measure of internship success. Organisations may not always have an available position, particularly micro and small enterprises. However, they can still support the intern's transition by providing a reference, validating acquired competences, facilitating professional contacts or informing the intern about future opportunities.

Possible pathways may include employment within the organisation, extension or continuation of the learning experience, participation in future projects, inclusion in a talent pool, professional references, networking opportunities or referral to partner organisations.

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Organisations should also consider maintaining relationships with former interns where appropriate. Alumni can provide valuable feedback on the longer-term impact of the experience and may later become employees, collaborators, ambassadors or even mentors for future interns.

A simple final question can help open this discussion:

What would be the most useful next step after this internship, and is there anything our organisation can do to support it?

Retention and future collaboration therefore represent more than recruitment outcomes. They are part of a broader transition from internship participation to professional development and labour-market inclusion.

Key Points – After the Internship

Understand: The end of the internship is an opportunity to evaluate learning and organisational readiness.

Act: Collect feedback, review monitoring evidence, discuss future opportunities and identify specific improvements.

Check: Use a small number of meaningful KPIs and document the actions that will be implemented before the next internship.

The final objective is to ensure that each inclusive internship leaves the organisation better prepared for the next one.

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Part 5 – Practical Tools and Templates

This section translates the principles presented in the previous chapters into short, reusable tools. They are designed to help organisations introduce a minimum structure without creating unnecessary bureaucracy.

This practical approach responds directly to the WP3 findings. The overall **Inclusive Internship Readiness Score of 48.8/100** shows that many organisations are supportive of inclusion but still rely on informal or inconsistent arrangements. The report therefore recommends accessible checklists, mentor guidance, feedback forms, escalation procedures and simple monitoring tools that can also provide evidence for the future INKEY Quality Label.

The templates may be adapted according to the size, sector and experience of each organisation.

Tool 1 – Inclusive Internship Checklist

Purpose: To provide an overview of the main actions required before, during and after an inclusive internship.

Completed by: Internship coordinator or HR representative.

Organisation: _____
Internship role: _____
Internship period: _____
Coordinator: _____
Mentor: _____

Before the Internship

Check	Action	Responsible person	Notes
☐	Management has approved and supported the inclusive internship.		
☐	A coordinator and mentor have been appointed.		
☐	Tasks and learning objectives have been clearly defined.		
☐	The vacancy and selection process are accessible and inclusive.		

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☐	Physical, digital and organisational accessibility have been reviewed.		
☐	A confidential conversation about individual support needs has taken place.		
☐	Reasonable adjustments have been agreed and documented.		
☐	The hosting team has been informed and prepared.		
☐	The first-day and first-week programme have been prepared.		
☐	Emergency and problem-reporting contacts have been shared.		

During the Internship

Check	Action	Date/notes
☐	The intern has received a complete and accessible onboarding.	
☐	The intern understands their role, tasks and working arrangements.	
☐	Regular mentor–intern meetings are taking place.	
☐	Tasks are meaningful and connected to the learning objectives.	
☐	Agreed adaptations remain appropriate and effective.	
☐	The intern is included in relevant meetings and team activities.	
☐	Feedback is specific, constructive and provided regularly.	
☐	Any challenges or support requests are recorded and addressed.	
☐	A mid-term review has been completed.	

After the Internship

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Check	Action	Date/notes
☐	The final evaluation has been completed with the intern.	
☐	Feedback has been collected from the intern and mentor.	
☐	Learning outcomes and acquired competences have been recognised.	
☐	Agreed references or certificates have been issued.	
☐	Organisational lessons and improvement actions have been recorded.	
☐	Possible employment or future collaboration has been discussed where relevant.	

Tool 2 – Mentor Checklist

Purpose: To help mentors provide structured and consistent support.

Mentor: _____
Intern: _____
Internship period: _____

At the Beginning

Check	Mentor action
☐	I understand the internship objectives and the intern's main tasks.
☐	I have been informed about my role, responsibilities and limits.
☐	I have sufficient time for supervision and regular meetings.
☐	I know which support arrangements have been agreed with the intern.
☐	I have asked how the intern prefers to receive instructions and feedback.
☐	I have explained working routines, communication channels and expectations.

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☐	I know who to contact if specialist or additional support is required.

During the Internship

Check	Mentor action
☐	I provide clear instructions and confirm understanding without being patronising.
☐	I connect tasks to specific learning objectives.
☐	I provide examples or divide complex activities into manageable stages when useful.
☐	I encourage the intern to ask questions and propose solutions.
☐	I provide both positive and corrective feedback.
☐	I monitor progress without creating unnecessary dependence.
☐	I review agreed adaptations and raise emerging barriers promptly.
☐	I include the intern in relevant professional and team activities.
☐	I keep personal information confidential.
☐	I document significant agreements, difficulties and follow-up actions.

Mentor Reflection

At the end of each review period, the mentor may briefly answer:

What is progressing well?

What currently requires additional support or clarification?

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Are any adjustments or task arrangements no longer appropriate?

What should the intern focus on next?

What support does the mentor need from the organisation?

Tool 3 – Inclusive Onboarding Checklist

Purpose: To make the first days clear, accessible and welcoming.

The WP3 survey found that only around half of organisations used specific inclusive onboarding measures. A structured checklist can reduce uncertainty and prevent important information from depending entirely on informal conversations.

Before the First Day

Check	Action
☐	Send accessible information about the location, schedule and contact person.
☐	Explain what the intern should bring and what equipment will be provided.
☐	Confirm agreed physical, digital, communication or organisational adaptations.
☐	Provide instructions concerning transport, building access or online connection.
☐	Share the first-day schedule in advance.
☐	Inform the mentor and team about the intern's arrival.

First Day

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Check	Action
☐	Welcome the intern and introduce the mentor and relevant colleagues.
☐	Explain the organisation's activities and the role of the hosting team.
☐	Present the workplace, facilities, digital platforms and emergency procedures.
☐	Explain working hours, breaks, attendance and communication arrangements.
☐	Review the internship objectives, tasks and expected results.
☐	Explain how and when feedback will be provided.
☐	Confirm whom the intern can contact about tasks, accessibility or personal concerns.
☐	Check that information and equipment are accessible and understandable.

First Week

Check	Action
☐	Hold an initial mentor–intern meeting.
☐	Confirm communication and feedback preferences.
☐	Introduce the intern to relevant meetings and team routines.
☐	Assign an initial meaningful task with clear instructions.
☐	Review whether agreed adaptations are working in practice.
☐	Schedule future check-ins and the mid-term review.
☐	Ask the intern whether any information remains unclear.

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Tool 4 – Accessibility Quick Assessment

Purpose: To identify possible physical, digital, sensory, communication and organisational barriers.

This tool is a preliminary assessment and does not replace an individual conversation with the intern. Accessibility should never be determined only by a generic checklist.

Rating Scale

- **0 – Not in place or unknown**
- **1 – Partially in place or available upon request**
- **2 – In place and regularly checked**

Accessibility area	**Assessment question**	**Score**
Building access	Can the relevant work areas be reached without avoidable physical barriers?	0 / 1 / 2
Internal spaces	Are entrances, corridors, workstations, meeting rooms and toilets usable by people with different mobility needs?	0 / 1 / 2
Emergency procedures	Are emergency information and evacuation arrangements accessible?	0 / 1 / 2
Workstation	Can furniture, equipment or workspace arrangements be adapted?	0 / 1 / 2
Website and forms	Are online vacancies, application forms and organisational information accessible?	0 / 1 / 2
Digital platforms	Can essential platforms be used with assistive technologies or alternative solutions?	0 / 1 / 2
Documents	Are documents clearly structured and available in editable or alternative formats?	0 / 1 / 2
Audio-visual content	Are captions, transcripts, alternative text or other supports available where needed?	0 / 1 / 2

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Communication	Can information be provided verbally, in writing, visually or in plain language?	0 / 1 / 2
Language support	Can additional explanations, glossaries or language assistance be arranged?	0 / 1 / 2
Working arrangements	Can hours, breaks, location or working methods be reasonably adapted?	0 / 1 / 2
Task design	Can the method or sequence of completing a task be adapted without removing its learning objective?	0 / 1 / 2
Quiet and private spaces	Is a suitable space available for focused work, rest or confidential conversations?	0 / 1 / 2
Support requests	Is there a clear and confidential process for requesting adjustments?	0 / 1 / 2
Review	Are agreed adaptations monitored and reviewed with the intern?	0 / 1 / 2

Interpreting the Result

Total score	**Initial interpretation**
0–10	Significant preparation is required before the internship begins.
11–20	Some accessibility measures are available, but important gaps should be addressed.
21–25	The organisation has a useful accessibility foundation but should review individual needs.
26–30	Accessibility is relatively well structured and should be maintained through regular review.

The score should support discussion rather than act as a pass-or-fail judgement. An organisation may score well overall while still having a critical barrier affecting one particular intern.

Priority Actions

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Barrier identified	Action required	Responsible person	Deadline	Status

Tool 5 – Inclusive Communication Tip

Inclusive communication should be clear, respectful and adapted to the situation without becoming oversimplified or patronising.

Recommended practice	Avoid
Ask the intern how they prefer to receive information.	Assuming communication needs based on a diagnosis or background.
Use clear and direct language.	Using unexplained technical language, acronyms or workplace jargon.
Give one clear instruction at a time when a task is complex.	Providing several vague instructions and expecting the intern to “work it out”.
Confirm understanding through open questions.	Asking only “Do you understand?”, which may make it difficult to admit uncertainty.
Provide written summaries of important tasks and decisions.	Relying entirely on informal verbal conversations.
Speak directly to the intern.	Speaking only to a support person, interpreter or colleague.
Allow adequate time for a response.	Completing sentences, interrupting or showing impatience.

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Give feedback privately and connect it to specific behaviour.	Criticising the person rather than explaining the action that should change.
Use the person's preferred name and terminology.	Making jokes or comments based on disability, origin, language or personal circumstances.
Ask what support would be useful.	Asking unnecessary questions about medical history or private circumstances.

Useful Communication Questions

What is the clearest way for us to share instructions and feedback with you?

Would it be useful to receive this information in writing or in another format?

Can you explain how you plan to approach the task, so we can check that the instructions are clear?

Is any part of the workplace, schedule, technology or task creating an unnecessary barrier?

What support would help you complete this independently?

Tool 6 – Feedback Templates

Feedback should be collected during the internship, not only at the end. Mid-term feedback allows the organisation to make changes while they can still improve the experience.

A. Intern Mid-Term Feedback Form

Rate each statement from **1 – Strongly disagree** to **5 – Strongly agree**.

Statement	**Rating**
I understand my tasks and learning objectives.	1 2 3 4 5
I know whom to contact when I need information or support.	1 2 3 4 5
My mentor is available and provides useful guidance.	1 2 3 4 5

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I receive clear and constructive feedback.	1 2 3 4 5
The workplace and digital tools are accessible to me.	1 2 3 4 5
Agreed adaptations are working effectively.	1 2 3 4 5
I feel respected and included in the team.	1 2 3 4 5
I feel safe asking questions or reporting a difficulty.	1 2 3 4 5
My tasks are meaningful and help me develop competences.	1 2 3 4 5
Overall, the internship is meeting my expectations.	1 2 3 4 5

What is working particularly well?

Is anything making participation or learning unnecessarily difficult?

What should be changed or improved during the remaining period?

B. Mentor Mid-Term Feedback Form

Statement	**Rating**
The internship objectives and responsibilities are clear.	1 2 3 4 5
The intern is making progress towards the learning objectives.	1 2 3 4 5
Current tasks are appropriate and meaningful.	1 2 3 4 5
Agreed support measures are effective.	1 2 3 4 5
I have sufficient time and organisational support to act as mentor.	1 2 3 4 5

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Communication between the intern, mentor and team is effective.	1 2 3 4 5
Emerging challenges are being addressed promptly.	1 2 3 4 5

Main progress observed:

Current barriers or concerns:

Actions agreed for the next period:

C. Final Evaluation Summary

Evaluation area	**Intern's view**	**Mentor's view**	**Final comments**
Achievement of learning objectives			
Quality and relevance of tasks			
Accessibility and adaptations			
Mentoring and supervision			
Team integration			
Skills developed			
Overall satisfaction			

Practices to maintain:

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Improvements required before hosting another intern:

Future employment, collaboration or learning opportunities:

Tool 7 – Problem and Risk Management

Purpose: To anticipate common difficulties, define preventive measures and ensure that problems are addressed fairly and promptly.

The WP3 report identifies supervision time, task adaptation, communication barriers, limited internal guidance, administrative complexity, accessibility and concerns about performance among the main challenges perceived by organisations. Risk management should therefore be preventive, not activated only after an emergence arise.

A. Internship Risk Register

Rate probability and impact as **Low, Medium or High**.

Potential risk	**Probability**	**Impact**	**Preventive action**	**Responsible person**
Mentor has insufficient time			Include mentoring time in workload and appoint a backup.	
Tasks are unclear or unsuitable			Define learning objectives and review tasks regularly.	
Agreed adaptation is delayed			Assign responsibility and deadline before the internship begins.	
Digital tool is inaccessible			Test tools and prepare an alternative format or platform.	
Communication or language difficulty			Use plain language, written instructions and visual examples.	

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Intern becomes isolated from the team			Plan introductions, relevant meetings and buddy contact.	
Conflict with mentor or colleague			Provide an alternative reporting contact and clear procedure.	
Wellbeing concern emerges			Hold a private conversation and activate appropriate support.	
Performance falls below expectations			Clarify standards, review barriers and agree an improvement plan.	
Internship is interrupted			Define contact, review and transition procedures.	

B. Problem Record

Date reported: _____
Person reporting the issue: _____
People involved: _____

Description of the issue based on observable facts:

Immediate impact on learning, accessibility, safety or wellbeing:

Was an agreed adaptation or procedure involved?

Views of the intern and other people involved:

Action agreed:

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Responsible person: _____
Review date: _____
Outcome: _____

C. Escalation Flow

1. Identify and record the issue
Describe what happened using facts rather than assumptions.

2. Discuss it promptly
The mentor and intern should normally discuss routine learning, task or communication difficulties.

3. Review expectations and support measures
Check whether instructions were clear, expectations were reasonable and agreed adaptations were implemented.

4. Agree an action and review date
Record what will change, who is responsible and when progress will be reviewed.

5. Escalate when necessary
The coordinator, HR representative or sending institution should become involved when the matter cannot be resolved by the mentor or concerns repeated difficulties.

6. Activate formal procedures
Discrimination, harassment, serious misconduct, safeguarding concerns or immediate safety risks must follow the organisation's formal procedures without delay.

The intern must always have access to a reporting route that does not depend solely on their direct mentor.

Tool 8 – Examples of Inclusive Language

Inclusive language focuses on the person, the relevant situation and the support required. Terminology may differ between individuals, countries and communities, so personal preferences should always be respected.

Avoid	Prefer

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Disabled intern, used as the person's only description	Intern with a disability , according to the person's preference
Normal interns	Other interns / interns without the specific barrier
Suffers from a disability	Has a disability / lives with a health condition
Confined to a wheelchair	Wheelchair user
The handicapped	People with disabilities
Special needs intern	Intern with specific support or accessibility needs
Vulnerable person	Person facing specific barriers or circumstances
Foreigner	International intern, migrant-background intern or the person's relevant nationality
Poor or disadvantaged intern	Intern facing economic or social barriers
Does not speak our language properly	Is developing proficiency in the working language
Difficult cultural background	Different cultural background or experience
We treat everyone exactly the same	We provide equitable opportunities and appropriate support
The intern cannot perform the role	A barrier or adjustment should be reviewed to support performance
We made an exception for them	We agreed a reasonable adjustment
Are you sure you can manage this?	What conditions or support would enable you to complete this task?
Tell us what is wrong with you	Is there any adjustment that would support your participation?

Inclusive Vacancy Wording

Instead of:

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The candidate must be young, energetic, a native speaker and able to work under pressure.

Use:

We are looking for a motivated intern interested in developing skills in this field. The role requires the ability to communicate effectively in the working language and manage agreed priorities. Reasonable adjustments to the recruitment process and internship may be discussed upon request.

Inclusive Feedback

Instead of:

You are not independent enough.

Use:

For the next task, we would like you to complete the first stage independently and then review the result with your mentor. Let us agree which instructions and resources you need before starting.

Instead of:

Your communication is a problem.

Use:

Some deadlines and task updates have not been communicated clearly. Let us agree which channel you will use and when progress updates should be provided.

Using the Tools as Evidence of Progress

The tools should not be completed merely to produce documentation. Their value lies in improving the internship experience and helping the organisation learn from implementation.

Together, the completed checklists, accessibility assessment, mentor records, feedback forms and risk-management documents can demonstrate that the organisation:

- prepared the internship systematically;
- assigned clear responsibilities;
- reviewed accessibility and support needs;

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- monitored the intern’s experience;
- addressed difficulties through defined procedures;
- collected feedback and identified improvements.

This evidence can support the organisation’s self-assessment and its future pathway towards the **INKEY Quality Label**, which should recognise practical implementation and continuous progress rather than declarations alone.

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Part 6 – Self-Assessment Tool

1. Purpose of the Self-Assessment

The INKEY Self-Assessment Tool helps organisations reflect on their current capacity to plan and deliver inclusive internships for young people with disabilities and/or fewer opportunities. It represents a simple diagnostic instrument that can help companies in improve their readiness.

It is a simplified version of the **Inclusive Internship Readiness Score** developed through the WP3 Company Survey. The full INKEY model assesses six dimensions of organisational readiness: organisational commitment and governance; inclusive recruitment and onboarding; accessibility and reasonable accommodation; mentoring, support and wellbeing; monitoring and continuous improvement; and internship implementation readiness.

The self-assessment is not a legal audit or certification. Its purpose is to help organisations identify existing strengths, recognise gaps and select realistic priorities for improvement.

For each statement, organisations should consider not only whether a practice is intended, but whether it is actually implemented and supported by evidence.

The mini self-assessment uses the same four readiness levels as the full INKEY Readiness Score. This ensures consistency between the WP3 Survey Report, the Toolkit and the INKEY Quality Label. Organisations scoring below 40% are classified as being at the Initial Readiness stage, meaning that inclusive practices are still limited, informal or not yet systematically implemented, and it is considered under the level “Initial Readiness”.

Scoring Scale

Score	Description
0	No adaptations. The practice is not in place, or the organisation does not know whether it exists.
1	Some adaptations. The practice exists informally, occasionally or only in some cases.
2	Adapted recruitment. The practice is structured, regularly implemented and supported by evidence.

2. Mini Readiness Questionnaire

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Dimension 1 – Governance and Strategic Commitment

Statement	Score
The organisation has a formal or internal D&I policy or clear inclusion guidelines.	0 / 1 / 2
Top management actively supports inclusive internships and communicates this commitment internally.	0 / 1 / 2
A named person or function is responsible for coordinating inclusive internship practices.	0 / 1 / 2

Dimension 2 – Inclusive Recruitment and Onboarding

Statement	Score
Internship vacancies and application procedures use accessible and inclusive language.	0 / 1 / 2
The organisation uses dedicated outreach channels and can adapt selection steps on request. .	0 / 1 / 2
The onboarding process includes specific inclusion measures, such as a buddy, support-needs discussion or planned check-ins.	0 / 1 / 2

Dimension 3 – Accessibility and Reasonable Accommodation

Statement	Score
Physical premises and essential facilities are accessible or can be adapted.	0 / 1 / 2
Digital tools, websites, forms and work platforms are accessible or suitable alternatives are available. .	0 / 1 / 2
Sensory and communication accommodations can be provided where needed. .	0 / 1 / 2

Dimension 4 – Training and Skills Development

Statement	Score

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Every intern is assigned a named mentor or workplace tutor with sufficient time for the role and specific D&I training.	0 / 1 / 2
The organisation has a mentoring or tutoring programme for interns.	0 / 1 / 2
Managers and staff receive D&I training.	0 / 1 / 2

Dimension 5 – Organisational Culture and Wellbeing

Statement	**Score**
The organisation monitors staff/intern perceptions of inclusion or workplace climate.	0 / 1 / 2
Interns have access to safe and confidential channels for reporting discrimination or difficulties.	0 / 1 / 2
The organisation provides wellbeing measures and, where relevant, financial or practical support for interns.	0 / 1 / 2

Dimension 6 – D&I Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

Statement	**Score**
The organisation tracks basic D&I or inclusive internship indicators.	0 / 1 / 2
Monitoring includes participation, accessibility, support and internship outcomes.	0 / 1 / 2
D&I information is reviewed and reported regularly and used to improve practice.	0 / 1 / 2

Dimension 7 – Internship Implementation Readiness and experience

Statement	**Score**
The organisation has previous experience hosting interns with fewer opportunities.	0 / 1 / 2
The organisation has implemented practical adjustments or support measures during previous internships.	0 / 1 / 2

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Financial compensation or practical support such as meals, transport or accommodation is available where possible.	0 / 1 / 2

Dimension 8 – Readiness and Commitment

Information only – not scored

Statement	Response
Is the organisation willing to host interns with fewer opportunities?	Yes / Conditional / No
Is the organisation interested in D&I capacity-building or informative seminars?	Yes / No
Is the organisation willing to continue improving its inclusive internship practices?	Yes / Partly / No

This criterion should **not be included in the score**.

3. Calculating the Result

Add the scores assigned to all 18 statements.

Maximum score: 42 points

To obtain a percentage score, use the following calculation:

Total points obtained ÷ 42 × 100

Percentage score	Readiness profile
Below 40%	Low Readiness/Initial

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40–59%	Medium Readiness/Developing
60–100%	High Readiness/Excellence Readiness (75%+)

These three profiles correspond to the broader maturity clusters used in the WP3 report. Low Readiness reflects the INKEY **Initial Readiness** stage; Medium Readiness corresponds to **Developing Readiness**; and High Readiness includes both **Advanced Readiness** and **Excellence Readiness** organisations.

The WP3 survey recorded an average score of **48.8 out of 100**, placing the overall sample in the Developing Readiness stage. This confirms that many organisations are open to inclusion and already use some relevant practices, but still need clearer responsibilities, more structured mentoring, improved accessibility and stronger monitoring systems.

4. Readiness Profiles and Mini Recommendations

The organisation's score identifies its current stage of inclusive internship readiness. Each profile includes practical recommendations to support gradual and realistic improvement.

The readiness level should not be interpreted as a permanent classification. It represents the organisation's current situation and may change as new practices, tools and procedures are introduced.

Initial Readiness – Below 40%

The organisation is at the beginning of its inclusive internship journey. Interest in inclusion may be present, but practices are limited, informal or not yet consistently implemented. Responsibilities may be unclear, accessibility may not have been reviewed and support may depend mainly on the goodwill of individual staff members.

At this stage, the organisation should not attempt to introduce a complex inclusion system immediately. The priority is to establish a safe and manageable foundation before hosting an intern.

The organisation should begin by:

- appointing one person responsible for coordinating the internship;
- assigning a mentor or tutor with sufficient time for the role;

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- defining clear and meaningful internship tasks;
- reviewing the main physical, digital and organisational barriers;
- establishing a confidential process for discussing support needs;
- preparing a basic onboarding and check-in schedule;
- identifying external organisations that may provide advice or specialist support.

Recommended first action: select three questionnaire statements scored **0** and convert them into specific actions to be completed before the next internship begins.

Suggested evidence of progress: mentor appointment, completed accessibility checklist, onboarding plan and internship responsibility matrix.

Developing Readiness – 40–59%

The organisation already implements some inclusive practices and demonstrates a positive commitment to hosting interns with fewer opportunities. However, procedures may be inconsistent, undocumented or dependent on particular staff members.

This stage reflects the average profile identified through the INKEY Company Survey. Organisations at this level generally have a useful starting foundation but need to move from informal support to more structured and repeatable practices.

The organisation should focus on formalising mentor responsibilities, improving recruitment and onboarding, documenting agreed adaptations and collecting feedback from interns and mentors.

Particular attention should be given to areas that were found to be less developed through the WP3 survey, including digital accessibility, regular D&I training, structured mentoring and monitoring indicators.

Recommended first action: identify the lowest-scoring readiness dimension and develop a six-month improvement plan with clear responsibilities, deadlines and expected evidence.

Suggested evidence of progress: mentor role description, inclusive vacancy template, adaptation record, check-in forms and mid-term feedback.

Advanced Readiness – 60–74%

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The organisation has established several structured inclusive practices and is generally prepared to host interns with different backgrounds and support needs.

Responsibilities, mentoring and accessibility arrangements are usually defined, although implementation may not yet be fully consistent across all teams, departments or internship roles. Monitoring may also focus more on completed activities than on the quality and impact of the internship experience.

At this stage, the organisation should strengthen consistency, measure outcomes and ensure that inclusive practices do not depend on one manager, mentor or department.

The organisation should also involve interns more actively in evaluating procedures and identifying improvements.

Recommended first action: review all questionnaire statements scored **1** and define what would be required to move each practice from partial implementation to a structured and regularly monitored procedure.

Suggested evidence of progress: organisational policy or guidelines, mentor training records, accessibility review, internship KPIs, final evaluation reports and annual improvement plan.

Excellence readiness – 75–100%

The organisation demonstrates a mature and structured approach to inclusive internships. Inclusion is supported by leadership, translated into operational procedures and monitored through evidence and feedback.

The organisation is able not only to respond to individual support needs, but also to anticipate barriers, review its practices and use internship results to improve wider organisational processes.

Reaching this level does not mean that improvement is complete. Inclusion requires continuous review, particularly when new interns, technologies, working arrangements or organisational contexts are introduced.

Organisations at this stage should focus on innovation, transferability and peer support. They may document good practices, support less experienced organisations, contribute to awareness activities and test new approaches to accessibility and mentoring.

Recommended first action: identify one effective inclusive internship practice that can be documented, evaluated and shared with partner organisations or incorporated into the INKEY good-practice collection.

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Suggested evidence of progress: consistent implementation records, positive intern feedback, achievement of agreed KPIs, documented organisational improvements, transferable case studies and support provided to other organisations.

Summary of Recommended Priorities

Readiness level	Main priority
Initial Readiness	Establish the minimum conditions required to host an intern safely and inclusively.
Developing Readiness	Transform informal practices into clear and repeatable procedures.
Advanced Readiness	Improve consistency, monitoring and organisational learning.
Excellence readiness	Demonstrate impact, innovate and transfer good practices to others.

5. General Recommendations for Improvement

The total score provides a general picture, but organisations should also examine the result of each individual dimension. A relatively high overall score may hide a significant weakness in accessibility, mentoring or safe reporting.

A practical improvement process should follow four stages:

Stage	Guiding question
Identify	Which statements received the lowest scores?
Prioritise	Which gaps could most seriously affect an intern's access, safety or learning?
Act	What realistic action can be introduced, by whom and by when?
Review	What evidence will show that the action has been implemented and is effective?

Priority should first be given to issues that could prevent participation or create risks, such as inaccessible recruitment, lack of a mentor, absence of a confidential reporting channel or failure to implement an agreed adjustment.

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Organisations should then strengthen the practices that make inclusion sustainable. These include staff awareness, structured onboarding, regular feedback, data collection and cooperation with universities, training providers, employment services, NGOs or specialist organisations.

Mini Improvement Plan

Priority area	Action	Responsible person	Deadline	Evidence of completion

The self-assessment should be repeated after a significant internship cycle or at least once per year. Progress should be evaluated through evidence of implementation rather than changes in declared intentions alone.

6. Connection with the INKEY Quality Label

The INKEY Self-Assessment Tool provides an initial pathway towards the future **INKEY Quality Label**.

The Toolkit helps organisations understand and introduce inclusive practices. The self-assessment allows them to identify their current maturity level. The Quality Label may then recognise organisations that can demonstrate meaningful implementation, organisational commitment and improvement over time.

The WP3 maturity model distinguishes four detailed readiness stages:

INKEY readiness stage	Score
Initial Readiness	Below 40
Developing Readiness	40–59
Advanced Readiness	60–74
Excellence readiness	75–100

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The Quality Label should not be awarded solely on the basis of a self-declared score. Organisations should be able to provide proportionate evidence, such as an inclusive internship checklist, mentor appointment, accessible recruitment materials, onboarding records, reasonable-adjustment arrangements, feedback forms, monitoring results and an improvement plan. The full INKEY model explicitly links the Toolkit with gradual movement between readiness stages and the Quality Label with evidence of implementation and progress.

Smaller organisations should not be disadvantaged because they have fewer formal departments or resources. Evidence should be proportionate to organisational size and may include simple but consistently applied procedures.

The proposed pathway is therefore:

Complete the self-assessment → Identify priority improvements → Use the Toolkit tools → Implement an inclusive internship → Collect evidence and feedback → Review progress → Apply for or renew the INKEY Quality Label

The Label should recognise both the quality of current practices and a credible commitment to continuous improvement. Its purpose is not to declare that an organisation is perfectly inclusive, but to demonstrate that inclusion is intentionally planned, practically implemented and regularly reviewed.

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INKEY

INCLUSIVE INTERNSHIPS

FROM WILLINGNESS TO READINESS

How organisations can turn inclusive intentions into effective internship practice

94.4%

WILLING OR CONDITIONALLY WILLING

to host INKEY interns

48.8 / 100

AVERAGE READINESS SCORE

Developing Readiness

GOOD INTENTIONS ARE THE START. STRUCTURED PRACTICE CREATES INCLUSION.

1

PREPARE

Appoint roles
Review barriers
Plan meaningful tasks

2

SUPPORT

Mentor actively
Check in regularly
Include the intern

3

IMPROVE

Collect feedback
Measure outcomes
Document progress

5 QUICK WINS FOR EVERY ORGANISATION

1	**Appoint one responsible contact person.**
2	Assign a prepared mentor with time for the role.
3	Ask the intern what support would be useful.
4	Schedule regular check-ins from the beginning.
5	Collect feedback and improve the next internship.

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INKEY

INCLUSIVE INTERNSHIPS

INCLUSIVE INTERNSHIP AT A GLANCE

A simple six-step cycle for organisations

PREPARE → RECRUIT → WELCOME → SUPPORT → MONITOR → IMPROVE

1
PREPARE

Define meaningful tasks, appoint a coordinator and mentor, and review physical, digital and organisational accessibility.

2
RECRUIT

Use inclusive language, distinguish essential requirements and offer accessible application and interview options.

3
WELCOME

Provide accessible pre-arrival information, structured onboarding and a clear first-week plan.

4
SUPPORT

Use regular mentoring, constructive feedback, psychological safety and appropriate adaptations.

5
MONITOR

Track learning, participation, accessibility, wellbeing and issue resolution through simple indicators.

6
IMPROVE

Collect intern and mentor feedback, document lessons learned and update future internship procedures.

WHAT GOOD PRACTICE LOOKS LIKE

CLEAR

Roles, tasks and expectations are understood.

ACCESSIBLE

Barriers are anticipated and adjustments are reviewed.

MEASURABLE

Feedback and evidence guide improvement.

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INKEY

INCLUSIVE INTERNSHIPS

THE INKEY READINESS JOURNEY

Four stages of organisational development towards inclusive internship quality

SELF-ASSESS → PRIORITISE → IMPLEMENT → COLLECT EVIDENCE → IMPROVE

LEVEL	WHAT IT MEANS	MAIN PRIORITY	USEFUL EVIDENCE
INITIAL **< 40%**	Practices are limited, informal or not yet consistently implemented.	**Build minimum safe and inclusive foundations.**	Named contact Mentor appointment Accessibility check
DEVELOPING **40–59%**	Positive practices exist but are inconsistent or dependent on individuals.	**Turn informal support into repeatable procedures.**	Inclusive vacancy Check-in forms Adaptation record
ADVANCED **60–74%**	Structured practices are in place but may vary across teams or roles.	**Improve consistency, outcomes and organisational learning.**	Policy/guidance Training records KPI review
EXCELLENCE **75–100%**	Inclusion is planned, implemented, monitored and continuously improved.	**Demonstrate impact and transfer good practices.**	Case studies Positive outcomes Peer support evidence

PATHWAY TO THE INKEY QUALITY LABEL

1	2	3	4	5
Complete the self-assessment	Select priority improvements	Use Toolkit tools	Collect evidence and feedback	Review progress and apply

The Quality Label should recognise evidence of implementation and continuous improvement — not paperwork alone.

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