

WBL-PRO Professional Peer Network: The team talks with the professionals – Lidia Nikolova from Varna, Bulgaria

Today we are happy to present to you **Lidia Nikolova** from Varna, Bulgaria. Here is how she presents herself: "I am a career counsellor with loving care. What does it mean? That I love my work and my heart is happy for the success of every young person. I work with students and am the face of the Career Development Center at the Technical University Varna. I have established, developed and continue to improve the activities of this department of the University through my management, counselling and technical involvement - 3 in 1. I am certified as a Global Career Development Facilitator. I think, I am deeply convinced that at this stage of the education in Bulgaria, the career centers are very useful for establishing the contact with the real practice, with the companies' achievements and with the support for the always searching young people. My work is a challenge with subsequent positive effect - creating a habit for constant learning and development - on the workplace as well as throughout the whole life."



Please review below what he has shared with us:

"Speaking about the benefits of the work-based learning I would like to start from a different point of view. At my workplace I learn all the time. I improve my communication skills thanks to my constant contact with young people and their various interests, questions and quests. I enrich my knowledge through using useful materials on internet, engaging in different initiatives and initiating various trainings.

From the viewpoint of the workplace - this is a possibility for our students to implement the acquired knowledge in real working environment and to find the right way to their future professional realization.

There will always be challenges, otherwise we will be stuck and will not develop. Among them a challenge in implementing the obligatory internships is the mismatch between the theory that is taught to the students and the real practice. Challenge is also handling with equipment and machines used in specialized laboratories in the universities and their up-to-date, modern and more sophisticated equivalents in real working environment.

What an amazing challenge for our students from the Ships disciplines department is to board on a vessel from the Maritime Register? They take responsibility as deck or engine trainee or mechanics relying on their education and trying to prove themselves in an extreme environment often with no option for a mistake and usually communicating in a foreign language.

According to me work-based learning in a university environment is mainly connected with the internship programs. They offer a large number of directions that need improvement if the mechanism implemented so far. Young people often start with an attitude to be of use and to learn new things but they are rather engaged in organizational and supporting activities. They need to have a mentor and real tasks assigned, incentives to perform in the best possible way and a remuneration to meet their needs.

Through the dual education idea I believe positive changes will occur. A practice implemented in Bulgaria by the TESH Company can serve as a good example. The approved young people work in the different production departments for a few months during a two-year period. They can be recruited at the department where they have showed their knowledge, skills and interest most. And thus feel adding value and satisfied!

During the implementation of the internship programs the students get acquainted with a new hierarchy of relations, new work rhythm and new approach to the production process. It is very important for the students to receive real support from professionals - related both to the implementation of the knowledge taught at the universities and to the acquisition of work habits. The mentor should be able to motivate them and to "light the fire" in their interest in the details and quality of the production process. It is important that the mentor is patient and acquainted with the new technologies. He/she should continue to learn and to show interest in the worldwide innovations. This is the only way to be the ideal example for the professional and personal development of the young specialists."

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