

ODISSEU Rural internships to boost youth employment

ODISSEU is a Spanish programme which aims at facilitating the return of young people to rural areas through employment. This programme of the Catalan region runs awareness raising, training and networking activities with rural companies in order to counterbalance the depopulation and masculinization of the region's rural territories.

Internships to support youth employment in rural areas

ODISSEU wants to contribute to promote the offer of attractive and quality living conditions for young people in rural areas by addressing the major challenge of skilled employment in these territories.

MORE INFO

In 2016 was launched the "Odisseu Practicum" programme, which offers an internship grant to university students from the Catalan region. Grants aim both at encouraging their return to rural areas and at promoting rural competitiveness. Internships carried out under this programme must include at least 300 training hours in the company. Interns' retribution amounts to 6 euros per hour. 50% of interns' remuneration is financed by the host company itself and the other 50% are financed by ODISSEU.

For its first year in 2016, 13 grants were allocated to 11 companies located in rural municipalities to host paid interns from the region. The interest for the programme, both from companies and students, increased over the years. For the latest edition, in 2019, 136 placement offers were published by 51 local enterprises and 57 grants were allocated.

Results from the first editions show good rates of integration in employment. Around 21% of internship contracts were extended and, after one year, 17% of students were still working in their host enterprise. These figures need to be nuanced, as a large proportion of the students participating in the programme wish to continue their studies after the placement has ended and would therefore not be able to continue working in their company in any case. Yet more than 60% of the students surveyed said they would like to apply to work in the company after completing their studies.

Profile of beneficiaries

Most of the enterprises interested in the programme are SMEs. These small companies, counting between 2 and 10 employees, represent 52% of the programme's beneficiaries. If the majority of participants were private companies, yet 40% of host entities were public organisations.

Statistics collected by ODISSEU are interesting for the reflection on youth employment in rural areas. Indeed, among the participating companies, 64% had never hosted a trainee and 62% stated that they would not have done so without the support of the programme. Apart from the financial dimension, the decisive factor of their involvement is the support provided by ODISSEU to contact students with a high level of education.

Innovative aspect



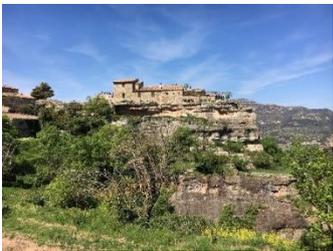
Rural internship programmes are multiplying in Spain. The good results of ODISSEU in terms of awareness raising on rural life and employment rate can inspire other countries seeking at maintaining the attractiveness of mountainous rural areas among the youth. Such programme can be used as a prevention tool in areas at risk of depopulation in the future, instead of being reactive only. It can also help to create skilled jobs in rural regions and attract young talents who will contribute to build smarter mountains.

The most requested profiles over the past years were in law, economics, tourism, marketing and communication as well as agronomy, forestry and natural sciences. Through the programme, these students tested their skills and knowledge in a wide range of organisations: from the Mountain Forest Foundation to Cerdanya Tourism Office, libraries, municipalities, Local Actions Groups, processors of regional products and social association working for social insertion or for persons with a disability.



However, students in social and human sciences encountered more difficulties in finding a relevant internship offer through the programme. For the years to come, ODISSEU wants to improve its communication through university administrations, to increase the programme's visibility in metropolitan areas and wants to further promote the high quality of life in rural areas, including in terms of housing.

Resources



The programme is a joint initiative of the Rural World Foundation and the Association of Rural Initiatives of Catalonia, with the collaboration of the Local Leader Action Groups of Catalonia and the network of youth professionals.

It is promoted by the Directorate General for Rural Development of the Department of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food (DARP) and the Directorate General of Youth of the Department of Social Affairs and Families.

ODISSEU is a LEADER/CLLD initiative addressing Priority 6 "social inclusion and local development" of the regional Rural Development Plan. It is financed by the RDP (€100. 214), the European agricultural fund for rural development (€43.092) and national and regional funds (€57.122).

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