



## Good practice

# Programa Campus Rural: University internship programmes in rural areas

**Working Group:** Territorial

**Member State, Regions:** Spain, all the 17 Spanish regions

**Thematic area:** Jobs and Skills



## Basic project details

### Lead organisation:

Spanish State Government (Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge) - Spain

### Partner organisations:

- Association of Spanish Universities (CRUE Universidades)
- 41 Spanish public universities are involved

**Initiative duration:** June 2022-Ongoing

## Overview and objectives

The programme offers university students paid professional internships lasting five months in organisations or companies situated in municipalities with fewer than 5 000 inhabitants and in rural regions. It also encourages participants to reside in the area throughout the internship period.

### The primary objectives of this programme are to:

- a. Immerse new qualified generations in the professional landscape of rural areas, providing them with new avenues for career development;
- b. Connect talent located in urban areas with potential employment and entrepreneurial opportunities in rural communities;
- c. Foster a shift in the prevailing perceptions of declining areas in Spain.



## Context

**The initiative aimed to address the following challenges:**

- Lack of interest in rural areas among university undergraduate students;
- Difficulty in attracting a highly skilled workforce to rural territories; and
- Insufficient awareness of the opportunities available for developing personal and professional projects in rural areas.

## Target groups

University students from Spanish public universities. Internships are intended for all profiles and academic areas (Humanities, Social Sciences, Bio health and Science, Technology, Engineering, And Mathematics - STEM).

## Actions

- Internships in rural areas;
- Professional training and development of professional skills in undergraduate students.

## Financial allocation

**Total budget:** EUR 4 200 000 (2022- 2024)

**EU co-funding:** No

**Sources of funding:**

- National funding (General Secretariat for the Demographic Challenge, Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge): 90%
- Regional funding (Each involved university budget): 10%

## Working Group Insights

“In agreement with the other members of the Territorial WG, I selected this good practice because it is directly connected to the challenge of promoting urban-rural dialogue, by boosting cooperation between urban areas and their territorial areas of influence. After several editions of the programme, it could be considered that it has great potential to build links between relevant socio-economic actors as universities, with rural areas and small municipalities. Thus, it is an innovative way to bring other territorial realities closer to young people.

By matching the professional expectations of young university students and the opportunities for training and job placement in rural areas and small municipalities, this initiative contributed to the attraction of talent and high skilled workforce. In the same way, it improved the vision of rural territories by young people, showing them as areas of personal and professional opportunities”.

**GONZALO VALENCIA SAGRERA**

Deputy Director for Inclusion Policies (Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migrations of Spain)

## Results

Between 2022 and 2024, the initiative has successfully engaged 1 500 undergraduate students from 41 universities across 600 municipalities in 47 out of 51 provinces. This programme has not only facilitated the development of entrepreneurship projects but has also resulted in job placements following internships, thereby contributing to the retention of talent in rural areas.

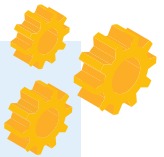


### Success factors

The initiative emphasised that improved and innovative forms of cooperation were crucial in breaking the status quo and effectively addressing the challenges at hand. By strengthening efforts to collaborate with organisations that are closely connected to rural territories, the initiative aimed to harness local expertise and resources. By increasing partnerships with rural businesses and municipalities, the initiative improved placement rates and post-internship retention. Finally, the programme targeted students interested in professional opportunities in rural areas, ensuring that placements aligned with both student interests and regional workforce needs.

### Implementation challenges

The main challenges faced by the initiative included the consolidation of the Campus Rural Programme as a comprehensive framework for intervention in local communities through talent development. Additionally, there was a need to expand the offerings by increasing the number of internship positions and fields of study, while also addressing institutional barriers that hindered the enlargement of internship opportunities. Another significant challenge was to enhance the connection between young talent and available job opportunities or entrepreneurship projects. Finally, ensuring long-term retention rates of participants after their internships proved to be a critical concern for the initiative's success.



### **The conclusion of our expert Gonzalo Valencia Sagrera, Deputy Director for Inclusion Policies (Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migrations of Spain)**

“The close collaboration of Spanish public universities with organisations that are closely connected to rural territories, allowed this programme to harness local expertise and resources and at the same time to connect talent with opportunities in rural communities. It was this element that ensured the success of the programme”.

## Useful sources

**Official website:** [https://www.miteco.gob.es/es/reto-demografico/temas/campus\\_rural.html](https://www.miteco.gob.es/es/reto-demografico/temas/campus_rural.html)

<https://elpais.com/eps/2023-01-09/los-erasmus-del-mundo-rural.html>

<https://www.courrierinternational.com/article/initiative-en-espagne-des-etudiants-au-secours-du-monde-rural#:~:text=Des%20universit%C3%A9s%20espagnoles%20envoient%20leurs,voie%20hors%20des%20sentiers%20battus>

<https://www.epe.es/es/reportajes/20240716/irse-erasmus-pueblo-guadalajara-verano-105449881>

<https://inspain.news/spain-puts-university-students-to-work-in-rural-areas/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVoP7l8pWJw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JE0CDH8BtWI>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p9qBTh\\_ojM8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p9qBTh_ojM8)

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kX-75hn0y7E>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CTQXYgvwKNk>

## Contact

E-mail: [secretariat@harnessingtalentplatform.eu](mailto:secretariat@harnessingtalentplatform.eu)

Website: [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/policy/communities-and-networks/harnessing-talent-platform\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/communities-and-networks/harnessing-talent-platform_en)

