



# eWBL – Making work-based learning work in an online environment

## National Report – Slovenia (WP1)

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Exploring the challenges met and the alternatives found by WBL providers across Europe in their shift from WBL to eWBL.

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## Introduction

The importance of Work-based learning (WBL) in developing work-ready graduates has been documented by several EU-funded projects such as HAPHE (2016), WBLIC (2016) and WEXHE (2020). WBL is a powerful pedagogy to foster graduate work-readiness because it is embedded in authentic work environments. As work is increasingly delivered remotely, a new and digital form of WBL has emerged recently – this is what this project calls “eWBL”.

The main aim of the project is to upskill educators in HE (lecturers, trainers and administrative staff) on how to design and deliver high-quality eWBL. To reach this goal, the project will explore how 25 high-quality WBL providers across Europe have dealt with the pedagogical and technological challenges associated with the transition from WBL to eWBL and the solutions they have devised. The investigation will result into frameworks and replicable models, a toolkit, open educational resources (OERs), and capacity-building activities and multiplier events that will help train those involved in WBL provision in HE.

Our aim is to boost the work readiness and employability of graduates. The project will specifically focus on how work-based learning competences could be fostered in the absence of a physical environment. As the work environment is increasingly shifting to online and hybrid formats, ways of making work-based learning effective in this new environment has become an urgent need of educators across the EU. The project addresses this specific need by developing frameworks, tools, and guidelines that educators in HE (lecturers, trainers, and administrative staff) could use to deliver high-quality eWBL.

### WP1: Needs and challenges

WBL is well recognised for its capacity to foster work-readiness in students, particularly through the first-hand observation of workplace norms, routines and language, mentorship and relationship building and the development of transversal skills such as communication and collaboration. However, if WBL is to be delivered online, educators and organisations need to envisage ways to foster those same competencies through digital means. This is a crucial yet highly unexplored topic.

This first step of Work Package 1 (WP1) reports the interviews with stakeholders of WBL providers across Europe and different disciplines. The interviews covered how WBL was provided before COVID-19, the challenges encountered in shifting to eWBL and the alternatives or solutions found in response.

Following this, the findings will be summarised in a synthesis report that would outline the main challenges and alternatives identified. The document will serve as a starting point for frameworks and replicable model development on how to provide high-quality eWBL that are useful to a wider audience, the focus of Work Package 2 (WP2).



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## Summary –Slovenia

V nadaljevanju je predstavljenih pet primerov članic Univerze v Ljubljani (UL), ki so obvezno praktično usposabljanje (PU) v okviru študijskih programov, v času pandemije Covid-19, izvedle v spletnem okolju.

Prvi primer spletnega PU je iz Naravoslovnotehniške fakultete UL in opisuje primer v okviru študijskega programa Grafične in interaktivne komunikacije, ki je bil izveden v študijskem letu 2020/2021. Primer je pokazal, da je narava ustvarjanja grafičnega oblikovanja primerna za spletno PU, ki poteka predvsem na računalniku in z orodji, ki jih študenti že med študijem uporabljajo na svojih računalnikih.

Drugi primer spletnega PU je iz študijskega programa prevajalstvo Filozofske fakultete in je bil opravljen v delovnem okolju, ki se ukvarja s prevajalskimi storitvami. Od marca 2020 to podjetje v Sloveniji deluje le na spletu. Vsi trije anketiranci (delovni mentor, mentor na fakulteti in študent/pripravnik) niso našli pomembnih razlik v upravljanju, administraciji, zagotavljanju kakovosti, procesu ocenjevanja/evalvacije in učnih rezultatih v primerjavi s PU v živo. Izzive pri ohranjanju PU v živo, in ne na spletu, pa vidijo v tehnologiji (zadostna infrastruktura za pripravnike), in sicer: materialnih pogojih in enakopravnem dostopu do opreme za študente, ki se usposabljaajo. Za mentorja iz podjetja je spletno PU nedvomno prihodnost, vendar mora fakulteta prevzeti bolj aktivno vlogo pri zagotavljanju ustrezne opreme in prostora za pripravnike. Komunikacija in nenehne povratne informacije so zelo pomembni dejavniki med vsemi tremi akterji spletnega PU, zato bi bil hibridni način (vsaj enkrat na teden z izvajanjem PU v podjetju) optimalen scenarij, med drugim tudi zato, da ima pripravnik možnost razvoja ustreznih mehkih veščin, saj so vsi trije deležniki izpostavili komunikacijske ovire spletnega PU.

Tretji primer prihaja iz Fakultete za socialno delo, kjer je PU del dobro organizirane mreže med fakulteto in zunanjimi organizacijami (učnimi bazami), ki jih koordinira fakultetni center za PU. Nevladna organizacija, ki deluje kot lokalni mladinski center za Ljubljano, privabi veliko študentov socialnega dela, ki so zainteresirani za delo z mladimi. Vsi trije anketiranci (delovni mentor, mentor na fakulteti in študent/pripravnik) so opazili nekaj pomembnih razlik v upravljanju, zagotavljanju kakovosti, procesu ocenjevanja/evalvacije in učnih rezultatih v primerjavi s PU v živo. Glavna izziva sta komunikacija in obravnava uporabnikov (komunikacija v živo je zelo pomemben dejavnik pri zagotavljanju ustrezne oskrbe uporabnikov v socialnem delu). Kljub temu je ta primer ustvaril tehnološko inovacijo v nevladni organizaciji, in sicer spletno platformo, ki temelji na igralnem orodju, NVO pa je svoje fizične enote razširila na dodatne štiri digitalne enote, ki se uporabljajo še danes (ena od njih je spletno svetovanje mladim).

EUTOPIA Kognitivna znanost prikazuje inovativen model v mednarodnem okolju in temelji na učenju skozi raziskovanje. [EUTOPIA](#) je pedagoška in raziskovalna skupnost desetih evropskih univerz, ustanovljenih z namenom aktivne izgradnje in preoblikovanja evropskega visokošolskega prostora. Glavni cilj EUTOPIE je povečati število in vrsto programov mobilnosti ter razviti in preizkusiti nove načine mednarodnega in medsektorskega sodelovanja pri poučevanju in raziskovanju. Ta primer, implementiran v disciplini kognitivne znanosti, je del pilotne faze, izsledki pa podlaga za nadaljnji razvoj izobraževalnega modela EUTOPIA. Gre za skupnost, v kateri študentje univerz EUTOPIA v mednarodnem okolju skupaj oblikujejo interdisciplinarno na delu in raziskavah temelječo učno skupnost za raziskovanje izzivov pojavov kognitivne znanosti in je za študente UL obvezna sestavina rednega študijskega programa. Spletno raziskovalno PU se je izkazalo za precej zahtevno, vendar primer nakazuje na vrsto pedagoških in tehnoloških novosti. Študenti so usvojili številne kompetence in veščine v mednarodnem okolju. Hibridni način izvajanja tega raziskovalnega PU bi bil optimalen, zlasti z vidika ohranjanja človeških stikov, povezovanja z vrstniki in gradnjo profesionalne mreže.

Peti, zadnji, primer opisuje praktično usposabljanje na študijskem program razrednega pouka, ki ga izvaja Pedagoška Fakulteta Univerze v Ljubljani. Spletno PU izkazuje predvsem na novo pridobljeno znanje pri uporabi spletnih orodij v poučevanju in učenju.





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# 1. Background

In Slovenia, higher education (HE) enables students to acquire professional knowledge and apply scientific methods in solving challenging professional and work problems, develop the ability to communicate with and between professions, professional criticism and responsibility, initiative and independence in decision-making and management. A mandatory component of some degree programs is internship, i.e. WBL (Govekar-Okoliš et al. 2022).

According to Pavlin (2014), the main policy driver for the implementation of WBL in Slovenia and the practice orientation of HE is generally related to the implementation of the Bologna Process and its link to better employability of graduates.

As a result of the WEXHE project "Integrating Entrepreneurship and Work Experience in Higher Education", the case for Slovenia, referring to Deželan et al. (2018), showed that there is no unified definition of WBL (na delu temelječe učenje) in Slovenia. We could classify WBL as a process related to providing students with real work experiences organised in the form of **internships** (praktično usposabljanje), **traineeships** (pripravnništvo), which can also be called systematic onboarding, and **entrepreneurships** (podjetništvo). Another Slovenian peculiarity, which is only mentioned here and is not part of the debate in this report, is "student work" (študentsko delo) and has to do with the legal framework for additional earnings during studies rather than the acquisition of relevant work experience. Based on formal student status, young people in HE can obtain paid work through special agencies - student employment offices - that issue so-called "student referrals" - administrative forms that take the place of employment contracts.

Educational programmes in Slovenia are defined by the Higher Education Act (Art. 33). The law stipulates that within undergraduate programmes, practical training in a work environment is a mandatory component of professional programmes (short cycle professional post-secondary level and non-university programmes at the tertiary level), while it is only optional for university programmes. An exception is internship in certain, professionally oriented courses of study, such as medical or pharmacy studies, which is specified in the EU Directive. Mandatory components of postgraduate studies generally include projects in a work environment or basic, applied or developmental research tasks at master's level and basic or applied research tasks at the doctoral level.

## Internship

Based on research conducted by Slovenian authors (Kristl et al. 2007, Svetlik et al. 2012), the internship is the most common and well-known form of WBL in the Slovenian system HE. The most common parties involved are students, mentors (faculty mentor) and/or a coordinator in the institutions HE and an external mentor (working mentor) in the organisation or company where the internship takes place. The document that best describes internship standards in Slovenia was prepared at the University of Ljubljana (Kristl et al. 2007) and describes three steps of internship implementation: (1) The student must apply for an internship according to faculty rules and receive approval from the internship provider. This step usually requires a formal application, written approval from the provider, and finally a contract between all three parties; (2) the next step refers to the implementation of the internship, where the faculty may or may not require an interim progress report; the third step (3) describes the completion of the internship, which usually requires a final report from the student, a certificate from the mentor in the organisation, and a survey of the entire process. In the implementation process, the external mentor in the employer's organisation is responsible for the professional requirements of the HE. The external mentor may be a licenced mentor or an employee whose educational level is at least equivalent to that which the student will attain in the internship upon completion of the programme of study. In exceptional cases, when none of the above criteria can be met, the most



experienced employee may serve as the mentor. The mentor is expected to be a role model, motivator, and advisor to the student so that he or she promotes professional growth, development of general skills (e.g., communication, critical thinking, teamwork), and specific skills. Mentors define the student's responsibilities, provide feedback, help the student understand the internal culture of the organisation and connect with others, explain things, share information, encourage and support the student. The specific duties of the mentors may be detailed in the internship agreement. The work of the external mentor is supervised by an authorised professor, the internship mentor (HE). For the mentor, the internship is an opportunity to learn through teaching, keep up with the latest advances in his or her professional field, get new ideas, expand his or her network of professional contacts, and ultimately get a sense of accomplishment as students' progress (Kristl et al. 2007).

## Traineeship

The implementation of **traineeship** in Slovenia is formal and required by law only in some sectors and professional fields. The concept of traineeship is still very present in employers' organisations, although it has different aspects than in the past, when it was a formal requirement. In some areas, traineeship has been complemented to some extent by an active employment policy. The legal basis of traineeship in Slovenia is the Employment Relations Act of 2013, Articles 120 to 124. In the general provisions, it states that a law or a sectoral collective agreement may provide that a person who, for the first time, takes up work corresponding to the nature and level of his or her professional qualifications in order to acquire the ability to perform his or her activity independently, concludes an employment contract as a trainee. The maximum duration of the traineeship is set at one year, unless otherwise provided by law, with some special provisions for the cases of part-time work, justified absence and the proposal of the trainer to shorten the duration. Issues related to the implementation of traineeship, such as the programme, supervision and the method of monitoring and evaluation, shall also be determined by a law, another regulation or an industry collective agreement. The trainee's employment contract may be terminated only if there are grounds for extraordinary termination or if proceedings for termination of the employer or compulsory settlement have been initiated. Voluntary traineeship is defined in Article 124 as traineeship that are completed on the basis of a special law without an employment contract between the employee and the employer. However, this type of traineeship still follow the provisions of the Law on Employment Relations regarding the duration and implementation of traineeship, limitation of working hours, breaks and rest periods, liability for damages, and occupational safety and health (Law on Employment Relations, Articles 120-124) (Deželan et al., 2018).

## Entrepreneurship

*Entrepreneurship* education is mostly taught at universities in the field of business and economics. Outside this field, the Slovenian system HE still lacks a general awareness of the importance of entrepreneurial skills. The need for these skills should be seen in terms of broadening horizons and providing students with the knowledge needed to start a successful professional career. In this sense, entrepreneurial skills can be just as important for those who will take this path as for those who will not (Rebernik et al. 2017 in Deželan et al., 2018). According to Deželan et al. (2018), young people are increasingly pursuing the entrepreneurship path because of their desire for independence, better development of their own potential, and achievement of goals that are not feasible in a regular job. Activities related to entrepreneurship education and training can be divided into three types: (1) promoting entrepreneurship and motivating young people to be entrepreneurial; (2) entrepreneurship education and training and mentoring; (3) support mechanisms for starting businesses and adapting to and entering the business world and expanding into foreign markets. One of the best-known (but not the only) institutions systematically carrying out these activities in Slovenia is the Incubator of the University of Ljubljana, which has been funded by the University of Ljubljana since 2004. It focuses mainly on supporting researchers, professors, students and graduates in their entrepreneurial activities. The Institute specialises in organising promotional events and workshops, and works individually with start-up companies





in business creation, testing and developing ideas, developing strategies and connections, raising funds and investments, and other activities. Entrepreneurship education and promotion is also part of formal education programmes to some degree. It takes place in the form of study subjects and extracurricular circles. The inclusion of such activities at the university level varies.

From the most recent analysis conducted at the University of Ljubljana prior to the onset of Covid 19 (Perovšek, 2019) it appears that some forms of the WBL in Slovenia are a compulsory part of the studies of all vocational higher education programs, of which there are 31 at UL. As a mandatory or optional WBL, it is also included in just over half of the university degree programs. In the overview study "Monitoring the Quality of WBL at UL", 374 study programs were analysed, and internships were included in 161 study programs, which corresponds to 43% of all study programs covered. Each academic year, approximately 7,000 UL students complete some form of WBL at University of Ljubljana. Disciplines with the most WBL carried out by number of majors include health field, civil engineering and geodesy, social work, sport, architecture, administration and veterinary medicine.



## 2. The WBL pre-COVID-19

The following chapter contains a description of the organisation of the WBL in five cases of the University of Ljubljana (The Faculty of Natural Sciences and Engineering, Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Social Work and two cases from the Faculty of Education) before Covid-19.

The Faculty of Natural Sciences and Engineering of UL offers two study programmes with mandatory WBL – Graphic and Interactive Communication and Textile and Fashion Design. Their students need to perform a 15-week WBL (600 hours) in the winter semester of the 3rd year of studies (BA). Each student has a pedagogical mentor at the faculty and a mentor in the company where he or she performs the WBL. Students can train in smaller and larger graphic, media and paper processing companies, publishing houses, design and advertising agencies, media houses, educational institutions, research institutes in the field of graphic activity, trade and public administration. The faculty has a nominated coordinator for WBL who oversees the organisation, management, quality assurance, communication with the working environment etc. A special website is available to students with all the guidelines containing: instructions for carrying out the WBL, documentation – forms before starting WBL and after completing WBL, student's feedback, outline of the content of WBL, data base with available companies and working mentors, the role of a mentor in the company and at the faculty, the role of a WBL faculty coordinator, monitoring or recording of WBL by the student and preparation of a seminar paper, also assessment of the WBL.

The Faculty of Arts at UL offers an undergraduate program in Translation and Translation studies (BA, MA, PhD). Translation Studies offers courses in Slovenian and English, as well as in German, French or Italian. Since the introduction of the renewed Master's program (2nd cycle) in Translation (Bologna reform), an internship is offered in the first year of study in the form of a compulsory translation practice of 120 hours (6 ECTS). It is completed in a work environment that professionally deals with translation services and regularly uses translators. In consultation with the faculty supervisor, interns may extend the translation practicum for an additional three weeks and take it instead of the elective (6 ECTS). Prior to the start of the WBL, the course Translation Practice is offered in the first year of the Master's program in Translation/Interpreting at the Department of Translation. The seminar (15 hours) consists of regular group meetings, an internship meeting where students who have already completed an internship in a company or other institution (government agency, etc.) present their experiences to younger colleagues. Individual counselling sessions are also possible with the department coordinator/mentor who leads the course and also organises the department's career day, where future interns meet translation service providers with whom the department has signed or will sign a cooperation agreement in the future.

The faculty of Social Work offering the study programme Social Work at UL contains mandatory WBL and is part of a well-organized network between the faculty and external organisations (learning bases). Social work is a practical profession, and the degree leads to first-hand experience in one or more of over 250 organisations, with one or more of over 350 practice supervisors. Students spend many hours studying practice in the workplace. WBL is mandatory as part of the degree (every year). In the first two years of study, practice takes the form of volunteer work, and in the last two years it takes the form of project groups. Students work with children, lonely people, people released from prison, they participate in youth workshops, camps, self-help groups, activities in old people's homes, they cooperate with disability associations and user organizations and much more. WBL is academically supervised by the faculty. Placement and supervision is provided by the coordinator. A Center for Practical Studies (i.e., work-based learning) has been established at FSW, led by the WBL director and coordinator and involving all faculty mentors. Mentors working with the faculty keep abreast of developments in the profession and new concepts and continue their education through open courses. WBL, which allows students to gain the expertise they need, is also an opportunity for companies to develop high-quality future employees. From September 1-20, the FSW will collect offers from learning centers offering available internships for social work students through an application form. The department coordinator will create a posting for all available positions at all learning bases, based on which students will decide where they would like to complete their internship. Students decide based on the internship programs offered, but also based on the location of each learning site and proximity to their home. The learning bases announce vacancies that can be covered by professional supervision and consider the specifications of the internship's objectives when preparing the internship program within their capabilities. Before the beginning of the internship, there is



an internship preparation for each internship cohort, the content of which is linked to the competencies and topics of the cohort. The preparations are prepared and carried out by professors and assistants within the framework of lectures for individual subjects and mentoring groups within the framework of the subject of practice.

At the Faculty of Education where we introduce two WBL cases (EUTOPIA Cognitive Science (Research & WBL) and Primary Teacher Education, they educate and train teachers and other professional workers in the field of education. They train all kinds of professionals, from preschool and primary teachers to teachers who are specialists in teaching two subjects or subject areas in primary school, as well as in certain secondary schools. For the Primary Education teacher, WBL is obligatory and part of the study programme in a form of guided pedagogical practice implemented in a primary school environment. From 10 to 20 days of the WBL is carried out per study year. Faculty mentors establish contact with elementary school mentors and a group of students before the internship begins and agree on the details of cooperation with them. They are introduced to similar instructions for carrying out the practice. Together with their primary school mentors, students plan and analyse their pedagogical work daily. Faculty mentors are in constant contact with students before and during WBL. At the primary school, they spend at least an hour teaching each student and analyse the student's work together with their mentor, other students in the team and the primary school mentor. During the internship, each student receives feedback on their work both from the students in the team and from the elementary school mentor and the faculty mentor. The WBL primary goal aims for the student to become familiar with the pedagogical and psychological peculiarities of work in the classroom, connecting theory and practice with the aim of making sense of psychological-pedagogical theoretical knowledge, and consolidating knowledge with one's own experiences.

During this pedagogical practice, they could understand and actively test special didactic skills to achieve curricular goals in a direct learning situation. Under the guidance of a primary school teacher, each student teaches independently for at least one hour a day, the rest of the time they actively participate and supervise. The pedagogical practice of a team of students within each department enables and encourages student participation in all phases of the learning process, from planning, implementation to lesson analysis. As a rule, the faculty chooses 10 elementary schools in Ljubljana and its surroundings for cooperation. At each of the selected elementary schools, 9 to 12 students in 3 to 4 departments, who are also led and monitored by a faculty mentor (university teacher or associate of a special didactic course), do their internships. Each mentor from the faculty first carries out an evaluation with a group of students at the school where he was the leader, with their elementary school mentors and the school management. Then, after completing the internship, students, elementary school mentors and school leaders submit reports on the implementation of the internship, which are evaluated by a group of mentors from the faculty. This group examines and analyses submitted documentation (preparations, reports, analyses, etc.), evaluates the practice of the entire generation of 3rd-year students, and prepares proposals for possible changes in the implementation of future pedagogical practice.

### 3. The eWBL implementation

The following chapter contains a description of the eWBL implementation in five cases of the University of Ljubljana (The Faculty of Natural Sciences and Engineering, Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Social Work and two cases from Faculty of Education) during the Covid-19 pandemic.

At the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Engineering internships were moved to the online environment without a specific plan of action and without special preparation of the students for the transfer of the internships online, as the arrangements for the internships (that take place in the winter semester) are made in the summer. As the WBL transferred online, the faculty checked whether the students had the ability to work remotely using their own computers and equipment. Those who did not have this option terminated their internship early and did not complete the required number of hours. The study committee then compromised that they could successfully complete their internship by adding a theoretical chapter in their final report that each student prepares after the internship, which was related to the work tasks that the student had in the company. This assignment was then given to each student by his or her faculty mentor. The transfer of the WBL into an online environment did not represent a radical change for the company, which had already been



working with outside collaborators in this way before. Even before Covid-19, they already prepared the environments (project management software) that are essential for organised remote work. Concretely, they had necessary project management software and access to programmes they use. The graphic design work is, according to the company, designed for remote work. Thus, all the interns were immediately involved in real projects. The mentor from the company met with the students in online meetings at regular fixed times, which were later adjusted according to the progress of work. As reported by the student, at the start of the WBL, daily meetings were held via Microsoft Teams with the mentor in the company. Tasks and guidance were received from a mentor in the company via videoconference, and further communication and reporting happened when certain phases of the project were ready to be presented. In certain phases only a phone call was sufficient, sometimes a videoconference twice a day if necessary. All the information the student needed to perform tasks was obtained and the mentor was very responsive. The coordinator of WBL at the HEI is in favour of face-to-face WBL, especially because the socialisation aspect cannot be replaced by online meetings and gatherings. Student feedback highlighted a lack of social contact between mentors and colleagues in the companies. 9% of students were less satisfied that their internship took place remotely. However, as reported by the students the quality of the WBL was not reduced since internships took place online. The issue that was reported by some students refers to the experience that – when performing internships remotely - they received work assignments from the company throughout the day and it was difficult to make a distinction between work and leisure time, so that the working day stretched over the whole day. The company also recognises that there is a lack of a social component in the online internships. The mentor believes it is important to meet students in person at least occasionally, if possible. As far as the work is concerned, everything else can be organised well or better, because everyone - company, students, and clients - need to be better prepared for the meetings. But socialising is highly restricted in online environments, both between colleagues and with customers. However, to work remotely, more self-discipline and self-organisation is needed which is more time efficient.

At the Faculty of Arts, the main WBL coordinator at the faculty started by contacting companies and other organisations from their internal base (they have about 100 contacts, they have worked with 20-30 companies regularly over the last ten years) to see if WBL could be offered hybrid or online when closure due to Covid-19 became a long-term reality. After receiving all this information, she held online meetings with potential interns to decide whether they wanted to take eWBL during the current academic year (100% online) or postpone it. The majority of 30 chose to do so. Generally, students are encouraged to conduct WBL during the semester break (January and February, April/May, and July through September). The student's task was exclusively translation. She was given tasks for each day. There were no major changes for the company in terms of staff preparation; online translation was already part of the daily routine. The only difference was that students could no longer be in the office. At the faculty, all procedures and activities related to WBL were transferred online (meetings with mentors, administration and management of contracts, others).

A special translation tool is used in company, and Virtual Desktop is used as the online office. Microsoft Teams is used for communication. In moving activities online, the faculty took advantage of all available e-learning tools and began using Zoom, Teams, etc. for daily instruction and meetings. The eWBL students at RWS were given access (with protection) to their virtual office. They had the same access as staff, email was set up for interns, they were given guidelines on how to use the system, etc. (an exception to access is only for translations of sensitive texts, where a special clause must be signed). Students were required to have their own computer and high-quality Wi-Fi access, which was mentioned by both students and the pedagogical mentor at the faculty that this could sometimes be a problem and should be addressed in the future. Regarding social events, the company has a dedicated forum (coffee break, quiz, morning chat). This WBL was conducted 100% online. No major differences were noted for the company in terms of management; the technical guidelines were conveyed to the intern just as they would have been in a face-to-face meeting in the office. The eWBL mentor noted that it would be easier to have an intern in the office, especially when the student starts the eWBL. Organising the eWBL needs more guidance, especially once the initial online call is set up with all the introductions. Compared to the offline WBL, the communication was much more formal. Many questions could also be asked by interns, and while they were sitting in the office, they could be clarified

immediately; during the online event, the company noticed the reluctance of interns to ask questions. A forum was open during the day, but students did not really use it. For the faculty mentor, the sudden situation of transferring WBL online was found to be quite stressful, as there were still many unanswered questions at that point (whether companies will be able to conduct WBL online, whether students will be interested, etc.). The feedback from some students was rather negative at the beginning as they were doing everything online (studying), including WBL, and it became quite stressful and difficult. In the last two years, WBL in the translation industry is mostly done hybrid (3-4 days remote and 1-2 days in an office). Company conducts WBL 100% online, as in this case. The faculty mentor was able to identify positive aspects of eWBL after some time (100% online), based on the two-year evaluation (by the students and feedback from the company). Interns are interested in doing WBL online, this is especially true for the students who are on a mandatory exchange abroad as part of the joint degree programme. Previously they had to wait until they came back to complete WBL, now the system is more flexible, and they can complete it from abroad. The administrative aspects have remained the same for all parties involved. The faculty supervisor has an online tool that students can use to request all the guidelines and instructions and documents needed to complete WBL.

In the company, a two-step evaluation process is used to ensure the quality assurance and monitoring of the progress and outcomes of the intern, whether online or offline WBL. The student's work produced is also reviewed and evaluated by editors or a person from the translation team who does not directly serve as a mentor. The evaluation is then discussed between the work mentor (the last day of the internship, intern has a follow up discussion with company staff) and a faculty mentor. The faculty mentor could not find any differences in this perspective. Students are already familiar with the main technological translation tools, platforms and programmes as part of their studies and have the appropriate infrastructure at the faculty in a dedicated classroom. Of course, if they are working in a company, some of the services (esp. translation companies) use currently updated and modern technology. Students are encouraged by the faculty mentor to use their time during eWBL to pursue modern technology in the field. Transferring WBL to online causes problems because of the availability of IT equipment. Some of the interns do not have sufficient computers and equipment available as it is at the company for company staff. In addition, some interns live in dormitories and share a room or flat with others. This will be explored further by faculty (faculty is considering setting up a dedicated classroom where eWBL could be conducted with sufficient equipment (camera, computer, etc.)). Assessment/Evaluation/Reflection: the work mentor in a company is a key person to implement internship. A special spreadsheet is created where all grades are entered to assess and evaluate the students' work according to different criteria (quality of translation, professionalism, skills, etc.). Interns keep a daily diary in which all observations are recorded (which texts were translated, tools used, type of communication, working atmosphere, driving forces and obstacles). The evaluation is sent to the faculty mentor. Prior to this, the intern, the working mentor, and the evaluator (corporate team member who proofread or edited the intern's work) had a debriefing about the intern's work (satisfaction, expectations, and learning outcomes achieved). The faculty mentor and the work mentor are also very closely connected, especially with the mediation of problems that arise during the WBL, either by the company or the interns. Special attention is given to the relationship between interns and faculty mentors, as mentioned above. No differences were detected in this aspect. Quality of students work/deliverables: For the faculty mentor, face-to-face WBL is important, and she/he would encourage it more than just being online, especially in terms of achieving soft skills and transversal skills, building a professional network, and meeting people in person. The company and the student built a good relationship, and the work results were evaluated every day by reviewing her texts to give feedback and improve the intern's work (via e-mail, special tools).

At the Faculty of Social Work at the outset, Covid-19 was a big surprise, especially for the year-long interns who complete a mandatory 240 hours of WBL. Intensive student preparation by faculty staff was initiated immediately, and WBL was transferred online, in a hybrid mode especially considered as they work with social service users. Student preparation was conducted 100% online, with faculty mentors and the coordinator available to students. Faculty staff communicated and coordinated a lot with learning bases (NGOs,



kindergartens, schools, social services, etc.) to further ensure WBL. A needs assessment was conducted by the students in their home region to look for opportunities to conduct their mandatory WBL in the institutions of their home region, as there was almost no public transport in Slovenia during some periods (March to May 2020 and then November 2020, April 2021). At the beginning, the students established communication via email with all papers between the faculties and institutions. The platforms used were the same as in the institution, this student (the respondent in the interview) also did eWBL with children in the local elementary school and provided individual learning assistance to the pupils. The daily schedule was made the day before, and time slots were set when the counselling would begin (usually in the afternoon). The intern noted the importance of the faculty mentor support and the group meetings that were held online where any questions or issues were resolved. This case was conducted in a mixed format (80%-90% online and 10% -20% in-person). In terms of faculty goals, the main goal was for students to achieve the same competencies that they would achieve in face-to-face WBL. The intensity was much higher in the online sessions because of the high level of coordination required to sustain WBL online, new ways of coordination, organisation, etc. Faculty mentors coordinated and communicated with work mentors. NGO offering WBL has 4 units throughout the city, and the interns are very interested in doing WBL in this organisation. Usually in the months of October and November, WBL is done in this organisation. In March 2020, the youth centre was closed due to the Covid 19 situation. NGO set up a special platform that was used for the users (youth) - the platform is based on a game. Since the closure, it has been expanded to 8 units, plus 4 online digital units. The FWS interns began to work on these platforms and implement WBL online. The intern involved in the digital unit with the NGO was required to complete the mandatory training on counselling (for online work with youth).

From the faculty mentors' point of view, the quality of eWBL, especially in terms of coordination and intense discussions between all parties involved (mentors and students), was much higher and perceived as something positive and improved compared to before when WBL was only conducted in person.

In addition, faculty mentors of Social Work, in collaboration with students and mentors working in the learning bases, evaluated eWBL considering Covid-19 and published a research paper showing that its spread required a number of adjustments (collaboration with remote users, reduction of practice hours, etc.) that created new challenges for students and mentors. The results of the study show that stakeholders had varying levels of satisfaction with the implementation of the practice under changing conditions. The challenges for students were mainly related to the impossibility of working with users face-to-face and the additional burden of adjusting the study process, and the challenges for mentors were related to how to provide quality mentoring and facilitate the expected experience under these circumstances. Due to the change in situation, students acquired several new skills, both in terms of content and use of information and communication technology. Research findings also indicate that mentor support (from social work faculty and practicum sites) is critical for students to overcome challenges in practice because it provides them with the knowledge of how to respond to challenges (Kodele et al. 2021). The student did not find any differences, the only obstacle in her opinion was the trust system built between the intern and the work mentor through the Internet. The intern believes that her mentor would have more information and a better basis for evaluation if she was present in person, but now her work was evaluated only through reports and online communication.

For the EUTOPIA Cognitive Science case the WBL research was found to be quite challenging by the faculty supervisor as all activities were transmitted online. WBL in EUTOPIA was mandatory for UL students because of parallel sessions and research and WBL were conducted in separate project groups. Compared to offline WBL, many breaks were taken online because the curriculum and tasks (working in a lab, various experiments) were very demanding when conducted online. The faculty mentor stated that although they thought about how challenging the online delivery could be, no negative assessment or feedback was given by students in this way. The staff were very well prepared and the IT equipment with various tools used in the cognitive sciences for experiments were used to a satisfactory level by faculty assistants and technicians. Each student had to have their own computer because of the various online experiments. Organisation of online WBL with students and partners was done through team channels and chats, some used Zoom

communication and emails, but much less. The faculty mentor pointed out that in terms of preparing the staff (partners, mentors, tutors) of the community, it would be much easier to hold this part offline, i.e., meet in person for a few days and prepare everything in terms of management and organisation before going online with the students. The WBL mentor from UK reported that the strategy where the work in EUTOPIA community, study programmes and WBL was done by the department heads and coordinated by the university management.

In summer 2020, the work focused on how to organise, manage, and implement the online study process. Guidance was provided and goals were set for what should be made available to students to implement the plan and achieve consistency, with individual attention to academic style and freedom. Many different supports and individual packages were provided for students. The approach to quality assurance was like offline: learning by doing, evaluating, and improving the process. The student was satisfied with the preparation; the guidelines were clear and working with students in a project group was good. The research WBL was quite intensive (experiments, challenges written through daily diary and final report). This EUTOPIA WBL was conducted 100% online, in English only. The faculty mentor sees the difference in online management by making meetings and coordination much faster, more focused, and more efficient. Management was a little difficult in terms of the co-creation approach, where a face-to-face meeting would be easier compared to an online one. In terms of quality assurance, feedback from all stakeholders was evaluated after the WBL research project was completed. The main obstacle was the very intensive online learning and work with few breaks, and sometimes it was difficult to follow all the activities such as experiments, project group work, etc. The faculty mentor noted that the students' work was much better organised, and their results could be archived and accessed much more efficiently in digital form, since only the team's platform was used.

In addition, the online sessions were much more focused this time, with students using tools to present their work, whereas the face-to-face sessions were just verbal discussion, without any material footprint. Equal access to the equipment is very important for the students, so they all have a high quality WIFI or internet connection. The difference occurred in physiological experiments (measuring emotions, pressure, nerves), in this area it was a challenge compared to face-to-face discussions, as many mistakes can be made when using online tools. On the other hand, when conducting behavioural experiments, there were no major differences compared to offline experiments. There were no differences in evaluating and assessing work; students reported the same things they'd report offline. The only difference that was perceived as a benefit at the same time was conducting WBL research and some tasks in a group with other students (e.g., the WBL mentor from UK university conducted a group task in which the participating UL students worked intensively with their UK university students in some sessions). For the WBL mentor, the online process was surprisingly similar, but required more passion and motivation to deliver (organisation, focus, timing is important). A positive difference noted was that more people (academics and students) were willing to explore more technology and improve their teaching and learning styles. The community was strengthened by sharing best practices and experiences and learning from each other. Assessment was done online, and the WBL mentor increased feedback contact hours through the team channel (a diary was set up). The student did well with the online delivery of the research WBL, but honestly prefers a face-to-face event, especially when the theory is delivered from the top down at the beginning of the WBL. At the same time, the schedule and deadlines were very strictly adhered to, and feedback from both mentors and tutors, as well as other peers, was provided in a timely manner to allow the research WBL to continue and move on to the next experiment. The assessment was the same as offline, the students did not notice any difference.



## 4. Impact of eWBL on learning outcomes

### 4.1 Soft-skills development

At the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Engineering, the coordinator of the internships observed that students had regular online meetings with their mentors, but there was much less teamwork. Students gained fewer soft skills and there was less communication. Online communication was less fluid as students were more reserved. There was also a lack of practical examples that the student could otherwise see and experience in face-to-face work when observing colleagues or engaging in conversation with them at work. For some students, remote work suited them because some companies were very flexible regarding working hours, and they could spread their work over the day. The work was more individualised. Regarding the specific nature of the interns' tasks, the work processes and the outcomes were not highly impacted by the migration to the online setting. The company reports that the biggest drawback was in getting to know the company culture and their colleagues. The meeting points were via videoconference and via occasional coffee outside where not only work matters were discussed, which they organised as they believe that the face-to-face socialising could not be replaced. The work has transferred very successfully to the web, it was perhaps even better implemented than if they had worked together in a studio, because all involved workers needed to follow more structure and order (e.g., it was not possible to change instructions or ask questions at any time). Such work is, as reported, more efficient and productive. The students were gaining independency, and the company mentor was able to work with two or three interns, which would have been very difficult if they worked altogether in a studio/office. The work can be better organised remotely. The company mentor also felt that the work better prepared the student for later independent project work. The way the work was done was that tasks were distributed, and the student did what he/she knew, and questions were asked in the meeting, not constantly at work. It was communication at a higher level. The student reported that working hours were more flexible, which was suitable for them, as graphic design is a type of work where inspiration is needed, and it was good to have the possibility to follow their own ideas and create their own schedule of work. However, gaining soft skills such as public speaking and communication skills was more difficult. On the positive side, such work stimulated the development of computer literacy and efficiency. Moreover, all the necessary materials were always close to them as they did not have to travel, so it could not happen that they could be forgotten at home. The downside was a lack of personal contact with people and the limitation that everything needed to be presented on a computer via screen sharing (not physically on the spot). Working remotely also meant that a person can work in a familiar environment and with familiar equipment. Thus, if any issues appeared, they could be resolved faster. In general, graphic design work can easily be done remotely, similar competences are acquired. However, such internship brought the student good references, but not as strong a professional network as a face-to-face internship would.

At the Faculty of Arts while implementing WBL online, some of the skills were not developed as desirable. This was the comment of all three stakeholders in the eWBL: company, intern, and faculty mentor. The online eWBL organisation provided some distance between people, but the company pursued a strategy to constantly encourage students to communicate, ask questions, critique problems, etc. The company set up a group chat where all questions and problems related to translation could be asked, but students were rather reluctant to participate in discussions or ask questions. The company mentor recognised that in the future, there should be more focus on the group and interpersonal communication and focus on developing the students' soft skills. Sometimes the mentor is also very busy with his/her own work, so he/she may not be available to the student during the day (for half of the day). This is even more apparent with online delivery and differs from face-to-face mentoring in an office setting. Students and faculty mentor mentioned a lack of communication, especially in terms of interpersonal communication, where face-to-face contact is lacking, immediate resolution of problems, etc. In contrast, the student was in general satisfied with the system as she was invited and asked every day to report problems, how she was doing, etc., but she felt challenged by interpersonal communication (she noted a lack of this aspect).



At the Faculty of Social Work in terms of transversal and soft skills, group work and interpersonal communication were different, often students had problems concentrating (online fatigue), but on the other hand, discussion in groups, especially with faculty mentors, brought many challenges for students and they were more involved in the intensive work they faced (the faculty mentor for WBL organised sessions with students participating in eWBL and many discussions were raised and compared against different problems and challenges encountered during eWBL). In some situations where only eWBL was implemented, students were not able to get similar experience compared to WBL that would be conducted face-to-face in their field (interviews with social service users - etc., youth, etc.).

For the EUTOPIA Cognitive Science transversal and soft skills were the same for them as offline, no differences were found here. The faculty mentor believes that during the assessment of this WBL, some of the students gained even more skills and competencies, especially in the areas of communication, public speaking, etc. During the online group session, the discipline with raising hands was a good approach, as well as the chat questions (the mentor noted that when conducting face-to-face, sometimes you forget who raised their hand, and you can easily miss one or two students, whereas in the online classroom, the toll allows you to see everyone who raised their hand). Also, there were many more questions asked in the sessions, including those that students sometimes felt were "the stupid ones." For the WBL mentor, the interpersonal skills of the student dropped tremendously, which was especially observed after two years of online work, but on the other hand, it was also easier for a mentor to work online when he had a project group. For the student, entering the digital world was positive from the perspective of networking in the international community. He notices a lot more transparency while doing WBL research online, and whatever you say gets noticed because you are very exposed online, especially when working in a project group. The student gained a lot of technological skills (using the tools in the discipline) but did not notice a lack of soft skills. The student was quite reluctant when the online world was introduced, but over time he has become accustomed to the system and has noticed some positive aspects.

In the primary teacher education WBL, the intern had a limited WBL, since the school closure and the way the WBL was conducted. The students in primary school had virtually no online instruction, all assignments were done at home, so interns worked in collaboration with the mentor and their time was mainly devoted to preparing the curriculum. Quite a few online tools were used that the intern was not previously aware of, and this benefitted the student learning outcomes. Teamwork was very limited, the student did not have enough direct communication and missed asking questions and sharing problems, especially with fellow students. All of this affected the acquisition of soft skills, e.g., teamwork, interpersonal communication, and presentation skills - all of which were very limited due to the process. The knowledge of the subject was quite good in theory, but was very limited by the transfer to eWBL, in class. The intern noticed a lack of these competencies and skills, especially when the online presentation was done in front of the class, which is completely different to when the intern is in front of students in a classroom.

## 4.2 Acquisition of practical experience

At the Faculty of Arts in terms of gaining professional experiences, the working mentor did not notice any differences. The faculty mentor and the student also saw no disadvantages. The student sufficiently stated that she had gained good work experience. In terms of acquiring disciplinary knowledge, the company mentor and faculty mentor could not find any differences. The student also saw no disadvantages.

On the other hand, for the Faculty of Social Work, there were many good experiences in implementing eWBL when dealing with crisis situations, according to the observation of both the faculty mentor and the student (crisis management skills, time management, adjustments in different situations). The intern could not find any major disadvantages, there was a lot of support from the work mentor and the faculty, especially working in a group was easier and you were not left alone. The only obstacle was the online sessions with users, as



the face to face situation is different, only verbal communication over the internet is not enough and does not bring the same result (motivation of users, sometimes fatigue of users, also non-verbal face to face communication gives you a lot of material). Through professional experience and discipline knowledge, interns have gained many more experiences, while in crisis situations they have to react very quickly. A lot of online group work and interpersonal communication were set up to solve the problems, so in this way the interns got and expanded their experience and knowledge that they would not face in real life. In some ways, especially for the interns who are introverts, this was an advantage for them in terms of online work. Also, they were more accessible in the online world, as the centre only works until 4:00 p.m., while the time during closing and handover activities in the digital world was extended until 8:00 p.m., sometimes even longer if there was an urgent case. This was a very interesting experience for the intern, and when the measures were dismantled and the company reopened, the intern voluntarily returned the next year to complete the mandatory WBL in a hybrid form (working in the digital unit) for the fourth year of study. In some cases, the WBL was adapted (some hours replaced by individual work or group work with faculty mentors to discuss and expand the subject area in accordance with the module and the scope of the eWBL). In NGO, the eWBL was also found to be a good experience because students had to cope with a new environment that they did not know before (challenges of how to communicate with users online, how to offer them help). The work mentor at NGO also set up supervision where the interns and mentor resolved challenges and other issues that arose while communicating with the youth, and many protocols were transferred from the offline to the online world in collaboration with the interns. The intern discovered some disadvantages in terms of her professional network, she would meet many more professionals who were not part of this network (compared to when she was physically in the facility) while implementing WBL online (other professionals would also be on the team). The intern has acquired competencies in eWBL, especially communication skills, ability to motivate and challenge users, adapt to the online situation, etc.

For the EUTOPIA Cognitive Science disciplinary knowledge and professional skills are specific areas, as this research gives WBL students experience and insight into research work in cognitive science (various focused experiments, the majority of which are conducted in project groups) while exploring a variety of cognitive phenomena. In the opinion of the faculty mentor, the linkage to the programme of study is 100% because it is mandatory and very focused and directed toward the goal of students acquiring the appropriate skills for working and researching cognitive science phenomena.

In the case of primary education, according to both mentors, many good practices were implemented in this eWBL, many online tools were provided to the interns, they prepared the curriculum and acquired new skills. The lack of interaction and collaboration between interns, during the eWBL is a disadvantage compared to face-to-face teaching, according to the WBL mentor, because interns could not acquire these skills and competencies (face-to-face work with students, interaction, presentation). The WBL mentor also suggested that the course should be introduced to the faculty in this area so that interns are prepared for online work, and that there should be a focus on developing and introducing these online tools. The WBL mentor evaluated interns work, activities, intern motivation and curiosity, and skills in IT. What was lacking was an assessment of the work done in class because the intern had no experience with students. The online course could not provide an adequate assessment of this.

### 4.3 Networking

For the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Engineering of UL, the networking opportunities were negatively affected by online work. Developing a professional network was more difficult to create, however, students could still receive contacts, but to a lesser extent. Traditionally, around 40% of students who perform an internship in a company continue to work in that company after they finish with it, and no drop-off has been observed in this regard since transferring the internships online.

For the Faculty of Arts mentor developing a professional network is key to WBL, but it is compromised when doing WBL entirely online versus face-to-face. The student mentioned that if conducting WBL face-to-face, she could probably establish a more direct contact for her future network.

Nevertheless, in all other cases we have noticed that establishing a professional network for such a short period of time and implementing it online was a challenge for all interns. This was most apparent in the case of primary teacher education where eWBL was implemented by a school mentor and intern and the only communication ran between the two of them.

#### 4.4 Company/organisational culture

In the translation case at the Faculty of Arts, although the Slovenian company is part of the large corporate network, it has built its own culture, norms and routine that are consistent with the owner's culture. Special codes and training are required for employees, but interns are not part of this process. They familiarise the interns with the general culture, rules, norms, and routines of all translation departments, especially privacy, data protection, passwords, etc., to avoid viruses or IT hacks when working online. The only difference is the use of technological tools as intermediaries. The student felt part of the company from the first day, everything was clear to her, the team was introduced to her, and she learned how the work processes work.

Before the WBL begins at the Faculty of Social Work, the intern should complete the ID (identity card) of the organisation where the WBL will be conducted. The intern must be prepared in some way and already have some knowledge about the institution (vision, strategy, norms, rules, laws in the field). Although the WBL was transferred online, no differences were noted by any of the parties involved. The only difference was that during the eWBL, this credential was expanded and upgraded in some chapters at the initiative of the faculty mentor and the intern. In most cases, interns in this situation received paper documentation and the institution was briefly introduced to them in the first online session at the beginning of the internship. The NGO work mentor organised an initial mentoring session in which the organisation was introduced (norms, strategy, mission, rules, workplace) and the intern was asked about their expectations. After that, the work mentor emailed the interns some additional information about the NGO's international representation. While they were receiving all this information, targeted online training about youth was provided to the interns. The intern felt part of the institution and could not find any disadvantages (after 6 weeks she felt part of the team).

The faculty supervisor at the EUTOPIA Cognitive Science acknowledged that students are not informed and updated about the profile of the partner universities, the culture of the institution, the norms, the strategy, the tasks, etc. They are only briefly introduced as a group and told which research areas they come from. Even if they start working with the external mentor, the online rule is to skip this and start directly with the research problem. It would be different if the students from UL participate in the WBL mobility in the UK and work in person with the professor (WBL mentor) in the lab.

In the primary teacher education case study, the mentor in the primary school gave a short introduction and tried to adapt the situation to reality as much as possible (he introduced the school and the sector - how it works in Slovenia, what the workplace represents, etc.). The mentor prepared the schedule for the WBL, presented an e-assistant (a special online tool), the annual plan for the academic year and the class conference with the students was presented to the intern.

## 5. Drivers and challenges to eWBL

For the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Engineering all study programmes are equally adaptive for remote work. For example, in the case of the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Engineering, the Textile and Fashion Design programme demands face-to-face work in the industry, while Graphic and Interactive Communication is “designed” for remote work. However, it is still always necessary to check in advance with the company where internships will take place whether the tasks in the company are appropriate for remote work. This is also necessary to avoid exploitation by students. Regular online meetings between students and both pedagogical mentor and mentor in a company are needed. Even if the work is done remotely, it would be a good idea for students and mentors to meet in person at least occasionally (which can happen also before or after the internship) to get to know the company culture and staff in person. Personal contact is important. From the company’s perspective, it is necessary to prepare the environment for work as well, in case of remote work - the virtual office. Accessibility of materials and project tracking are important. Videoconferences that are supplemented with phone calls and emails, when necessary, are essential. It is important to have a good structure for work and a clear division of job tasks to work efficiently. Personal face-to-face contact cannot be replaced; thus, it is necessary to see colleagues and mentors in person from time to time, which can also occur in informal gatherings. The student’s perspective confirms the HEI and company perspective. The importance of regular communication, including occasional face-to-face meetings, and a clear division of tasks is emphasized.

At the Faculty of Arts, the main barrier for the working mentor is the technological preparation of the interns to access all the online systems and platforms of the company. If the interns have a poor Wi-Fi connection, this could be a problem in terms of organisation, quality of work, results, delays, etc. To avoid any obstacles, a good strategy and plan for the eWBL should be written down with all protocols and clear guidance and supervision for the interns. For the faculty mentor, immediate feedback is not possible in eWBL and students sometimes feel lonely (online feedback cannot be provided immediately) as they are used to face-to-face communication. There should be a constant open and available communication channel available online. For the student, the main obstacle was the technological aspect also (availability of equipment and good internet connection) and space (during the eWBL there were many meetings, and she has a roommate in a dorm). The main driver for the company is seen in the time management (freedom and greater flexibility), i.e., one of the interns was abroad somewhere and the eWBL could be done without personal presence. Whereas before the WBL relied more on mobility in the region (Ljubljana being the capital), now all students who were at home in other regions could do the eWBL with this company. Moreover, the interest of students in eWBL in this company has increased in the last two years. The advantage for the students was the flexibility, freedom, and working remotely (no need to go or drive to the office).

At the Faculty of Social Work, the faculty mentor pointed out that in the social work field it is rather difficult to highlight drivers when WBL is done online. But that drivers can still be listed: students were able to adapt quickly and deal with crisis management, they recognised the needs and facilities of social services in their hometown. On the other hand, the interns were challenged in working with young people, counselling, or mentoring students in schools, motivating them when all activities were done online. From this point of view, this was a major obstacle for the eWBL. Another obstacle is also the high amount of online communication, which could be much easier face-to-face. In addition, all participants noted that the support provided by the work mentor when conducting WBL online was different than when meeting face-to-face. Often, the work mentor was already engaged in the online work to provide service to the users, and the intern was not always able to participate in the process because he/she was present in real life. The mentor working with the NGO saw the advantages mainly in the geographical location (no mobility), the organisation of meetings and scheduling, since there were no open doors in the centre and the consultation of the young people was organised in a newly established digital unit. The drivers were also the introduction of new tools, new areas that were not used before (IT, online platforms, and tools), neither by the NGO nor by the intern. They all learned together and shared their knowledge and experiences. Since working with youth and counselling is a

part of this WBL, the work mentor saw the barrier as not knowing or seeing the intern in person and not being able to assess the person as they would be able to with face-to-face communication. The work mentor sees the hybrid mode as the future in this field, but with the caveat that analogue logic should not just be applied to the digital world but should be studied and adapted very carefully when it comes to counselling youth. Work with professionals from IT, social media and the digital world who have experience and can transfer your needs from offline to online (synergy in the team) is an important outcome for the working mentor. Communication and the framework (protocols, agreements), quality and support in the online system are very important if you strive for the same quality. Interns' expectations should be evaluated at the beginning, with a stronger focus and adjusted when the WBL is implemented online (listening to interns' ideas and discussing it with both mentors, communication and immediate feedback are also very important). For interns, more frequent online meetings with mentors, availability of faculty mentor, and immediate feedback were important. The mobility perspective of not having to travel around was also cited as a driving force, as was time management. On the other hand, WBL took place throughout the day at this time, as a lot of online coordination and communication took place and compared to limited opening hours in the centre makes a difference. For the intern, the pre-assigned tasks and established protocols were sometimes a challenge that could be solved immediately if she had a work mentor in the office, which was not possible online. The intern also missed access to literature and the library (which she would immediately do herself), which was not available at the beginning, but was managed (with some delay) with the support of the faculty and the work mentor.

For the faculty mentor in EUTOPIA Cognitive Science, the main obstacle is the online research WBL itself, it is quite exhausting and sometimes the motivation drops radically after two to three hours. On the other hand, the faculty mentor could expose the main drivers, i.e., more students are willing to participate in the online sessions, more discussions are initiated by them, and more questions are asked (verbally or in writing in a chat). Moreover, this kind of internationalised community and project group research WBL is also a great motivating factor for student. Time management is also an advantage for the faculty mentor in implementing WBL online (especially coordination, management, organisation). Regarding online WBL, the faculty mentor would recommend that first, imperatively from his experience in transferring activities to the Internet, he checks and asks the students if they have the capacity and equipment to perform the tasks online. The faculty must guarantee and provide equal access to all. This is especially important if the same equipment is available to all in the classroom on faculty premises or in the company/lab. Priority lectures should be adapted when used online, new learning and research tools, techniques, co-creation approaches and methodologies in the discipline should be constantly explored by academia and the WBL environment to engage students in online WBL. It is also very important to go in the same direction and develop only one platform rather than using several different tools (Google Teams, Zoom, internal shares, etc.). On the other hand, the WBL mentor would say to be organised, focused and clear about the goals when delivering research eWBL. For the EUTOPIA WBL mentor, the main drivers were the continuation of political education for students (the university in the UK was under tremendous pressure from the press) and provide as collaborator and main partner in this EUTOPIA community. For the student, the barrier in terms of socialisation is seen. If he would be part of the international community in the UK and saw mentors, tutors, and other students live, the socialisation aspect (lunch, drinks, networking) would be different and much more intensive than he can imagine.

In the primary teacher education, the main obstacle for the intern was the fact that there was no face-to-face contact with either the mentor or the students. The intern had a lot of problems with the online preparation of the curriculum, in contrast, it would be much easier if the mentor was present in person to solve problems immediately or to receive the instructions. The lack of skills is a barrier in this eWBL, especially in terms of solving some problems when the intern is already facing the class as a teacher (e.g., how to attract students' attention, how to maintain class discipline, etc.). The intern sees the driving force primarily in technological aspects - new online tools or the tools previously used have been upgraded; she/he also sees the driving force in preparing the curriculum herself/himself and in detail. If she/he were to face online work in real life, she/he is definitely better educated than before the pandemic but considering the field and sector she/he is educated in, she/he would definitely do it face-to-face. Based on the experience, the intern would like to see more teamwork and advises the faculty to create a course focused on online learning tools as part of this degree programme to gain more skills in this area. According to the WBL mentor, the most important factors while evaluating and assessing the interns work were the intern's skills, motivation for work in a digital environment,

use of online tools, technological innovations, and use of the online space (which takes a lot of time). The WBL mentor advises to implement the system according to the didactic guidelines that have been previously established. Schedule and diary are very important to track the work, both for the intern and the mentor. The availability of the mentor to the intern is the key component for both WBL and eWBL.

## 6. Developed solutions

At the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Engineering, the intern and mentor in the company met for a coffee (in the garden) several times (prior the internship and during) to interact face-to-face. The meeting was partly informal - not only work matters were discussed. The company had used virtual environments before the pandemic. They used such environments when working with external collaborators. These practices were then applied to work with interns. They had projects in cloud storage, and they had project management software. Specifically, they used Dropbox and Asana, as well as Microsoft Teams for video calls. Regularly, email and phone calls were used for communication as well. The student already had all the necessary programmes and software on their computer, as they were essential for their studies, so they had no technical problems carrying out the work. The only thing they had to coordinate with the company was the versions of the programmes in which they were working. Video calls and emails were the tools for communication between the student and the pedagogical mentor at the faculty.

At the Faculty of Arts, the pedagogical innovations related to online socialisation and corporate team building were carried out every week and some of them every day. On Mondays, there was a virtual coffee morning to greet and chat with each other. Once a week, online games related to professional work were organised during the day (translation quizzes, games). All interns were invited to these sessions. Interns were encouraged to express their expectations (what do I want, do I see myself in this field, in this company) before the eWBL officially started and when they reported at the end to assess/evaluate the online experience. The company gave interns access to all their collaborative platforms, opening up their virtual worlds and the socialising aspect of corporate meetings. The contribution was to break the daily routine and create an atmosphere of group communication, team building, etc. on different channels (Teams). The interns were always invited to be a part of it.

For the Faculty of Social Work, the pedagogical innovation in this case was never mentioned in terms of socialisation, but rather served to improve coordination between faculty mentors, FSW and the faculty centre, and students. Both parties (faculty mentor and intern) agreed that having follow-up online meetings, supervisions, and working with a group of interns who faced challenges was a great benefit that might not happen in this form at the faculty. Mainly, eWBL was implemented through various e-learning tools at the faculty, and with the learning platforms through Zoom, teams, phone, emails, and a special platform based on a gaming tool (forum, Chanells) were created in the NGO. In addition, the NGO expanded their physical units into 4 digital units that are still used today (online consultation).

For the EUTOPIA Cognitive Science pedagogical innovations associated with this online WBL consisted of transferring experiments that could not previously be conducted outside of designated lab spaces with specialised equipment into the online world. In addition, many research quizzes were offered to replace the top-down approach of lecturers and work mentors, to break the routine and to motivate students. From the perspective of this internationally mixed project group, much peer-to-peer learning was practiced by all three interviewees. All respondents learned about many technological innovations that have become part of their digital world and conducting experiments to explore cognitive phenomena with online tools was another innovation that would not be used or known if there were no pandemic. Many different approaches, new learning tools and apps (Jamboard, Miro, Slido, Mentimeter, Mural), including some protocols, have been implemented.



For the primary teacher education case, no new pedagogical innovations could be identified. The use of online tools and rapid adaptation in this discipline was mentioned several times by all three respondents. According to all three people interviewed, the online tools used were a big driver and advantage in this WBL. Many online tools were used that they were not previously aware of, and the challenge of learning them quickly was a driver for all parties included.

## 7. Long-term implications of eWBL

At the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Engineering before the Covid-19 pandemic, all students performed a face-to-face internship. Currently, even with no measures taking place, some students still perform an online internship. Thus, the WBL and work itself will in many cases (where this is possible – such as in a graphic design field) remain online. Numerous students will be subjected to remote work later in their regular jobs, even if they would prefer to work face-to-face, because remote work means less costs for a company. From the company perspective, interns will continue to work remotely in the future. From their point of view, distance work makes people more productive, and the company has less costs. Moreover, working remotely saves time that would be spent for commuting to work. The only problematic aspect of remote work is the lack of social contacts (including brainstorming and live interactions) between colleagues. Thus, working in the studio (face-to-face) once or twice per week would be ideal in the respective field.

For the Faculty of Arts, the good technology and support from IT are the main factors that make this eWBL quality and possible, i.e., to implement translation WBL online. For the company mentor in translation, eWBL delivered 100% online is undoubtedly the future. In terms of further development in the implementation of eWBL, the faculty need to take a more active role in providing students with adequate equipment and space. They have already decided that in the future almost all WBL should (based on the company partners and translation providers working remotely) be offered hybrid and online (perhaps in a combination where one day per week would be available for face-to-face). The focus should be on further developing the quality of online tools, considering the psychological and socialisation effect (compared to online camera and face-to-face eye contact). From the cost efficiency point of view for the company, the cost of office rent, electricity costs, transportation costs for employees, etc.... are eliminated, which is in line with the approach of green policies, and time management has also improved. For students, it is very important that interns in eWBL should have the same access to technological infrastructure in the future (material conditions, equipment, and tools). Communication is also a very important factor between all three stakeholders in eWBL, the students and the two mentors. Students would still prefer to work in a hybrid mode (at least one day in the office to maintain face-to-face communication, as socialisation is a very important factor).

Since Social work is a specific area, 100% online WBL by a faculty supervisor is not possible, except for some online activities. When WBL is conducted online, all mechanisms must be in place to provide students with the conditions in which they acquire all the necessary competencies for their professional work and disciplinary knowledge. In the future, the system should be adjusted so that if the social service does not provide online services to its users, it would be difficult for a trainee to get into another situation such as the Covid 19 lock down. On the other hand, as mentioned earlier, NGO have maintained the digital units even after the withdrawal of the measures and other FSW interns are still working in the hybrid mode (online counselling is still available). The work mentor thinks the hybrid mode is an interesting option and supports it because they kept the digital unit and expanded their counselling to other regions outside Ljubljana. The work mentor sees long-term impact in networking; many people who would never meet in person have met online. The NGO has gained many new experiences in the digital world that they did not know or use before (tools, protocols). Flexibility is also something that turned out to be an advantage and was perceived as such by the interns. They have increased awareness of their NGO, and she also sees that many interns are now more interested in doing the hybrid WBL programme with them. Their programme has expanded (e-sports gaming competition, weekend girl talk, digital mentoring) and is the result of the shift from the offline to the online world, where

WBL has had a big impact (co-creating digital spaces with interns and other volunteers).

For the EUTOPIA Cognitive Science in the faculty mentor's opinion, the transition to the online world is a reality and the future, especially from the perspective of climate change and the lower mobility approach, i.e., some world conferences will no longer be held in person but will be held online, allowing equal access for researchers and students who could not attend (underfunded centres and companies compared to those with financial resources). For students, the hybrid pathway would be optimal for maintaining human contact, connecting with peers, and building a professional network (esp. in WBL environment, etc.). Contact hours with mentors for coordination and management can remain online, while some experiments to explore cognitive phenomena cannot be conducted online only. Many online tools were developed in the disciplines and will remain there, so the long-term impact of eWBL will also be to learn about new horizons that were not previously used or did not exist. A lot of training and workshops were suddenly available to give you insights into your area of expertise, how to do things online. For the working mentor, online research opens up WBL to new opportunities, more collaborations, and engaging the technology and global community and recognising what we can accomplish. It doubles their variety of new learning tools that were not available or used before.

For the primary education sector, online classrooms are still available today but not really used. The school where the mentor teaches conducts one online exercise per month for the class. The school mentor would keep this hybrid way with the interns in terms of WBL and spend time doing some of the eWBL exercises with the interns, especially to introduce them to the IT tools used in the work environment, as he sees digital literacy as basic. All interviewees do not see any long-term impact, maybe the knowledge and skills (of students, interns in WBL) are somewhat limited, but in general no major drastic impact has occurred. When working with students, it is important to have face-to-face instruction, and impact could only be seen on an individual level (especially for the introverted and at-risk students in general).





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## Annex

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