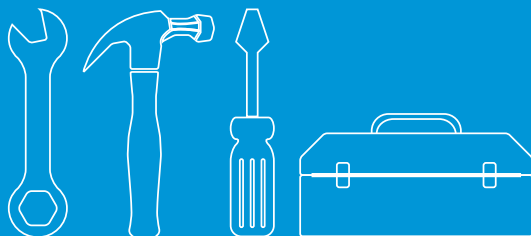


# FONDAZIONE ■ ■ CRT

MASTER DEI TALENTI NEOLAUREATI:  
A HANDBOOK TO BUILD THE PROJECT





MASTER DEI TALENTI NEOLAUREATI:  
A HANDBOOK TO BUILD THE PROJECT

Fondazione CRT  
Turin, May 2010

Written by:  
Federico Mallone, Giulia Manassero, Luigi Somenzari, Chiara Ventura

Fondazione CRT values young talents. For years in fact it has been carrying out the *Master dei Talenti*, a project created in 2003 to offer graduate students from the Piedmont and Valle d'Aosta regions (where Fondazione CRT is most actively engaged) unique training opportunities to learn and grow professionally.

The *Master dei Talenti Neolaureati* offers to recently graduated students from the Universities of Piedmont and Valle d'Aosta the opportunity of accessing 6-12 month internships abroad.

The internships, to be carried out in selected partner organizations and companies, are awarded through an application and selection process. Each internship is accompanied by a scholarship, funded by Fondazione CRT and given directly to the graduates selected. The grants are issued in monthly installments of 1,400 to 3,500 euros (gross); they are intended to offer everyone the possibility to gain experience abroad, regardless of their economic background.

Seven years of the *Master dei Talenti* project have taught us that what is important when creating "best practices" is the right combination of competence, passion and the ability to learn from experience. Starting from this simple intuition, we decided to write down the treasured lessons we learnt so that they may help whoever wished to repeat this type of project experience, or even to simply draw some inspiration from it.

This publication – which is ideally completed with the volume "*Master dei Talenti Neolaureati: Survey of Past Grant Beneficiaries*" – uses a simple and accessible language, as it is closer to an assembly manual than to a traditional abstract. This is why we chose to use a more informal register and to add text boxes and summarizing tables to the handbook.

ANGELO MIGLIETTA  
Secretary General

ANDREA COMBA  
Chairman

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. WHAT IS THE <i>MASTER DEI TALENTI</i> PROJECT?	10
History of the <i>Master dei Talenti Neolaureati</i> project	10
Why the name " <i>Master dei Talenti</i> "?	10
2. REGULATIONS ON INTERNSHIPS	12
General framework	12
Current Italian regulations	12
What is an internship?	13
How long can an internship last, and what restraints are there?	13
How is an internship activated and who must be involved in the process?	14
Rights and responsibilities of the host organization and of the intern	14
Foreign regulations	15
3. MANAGING THE PROJECT	18
Internal management or outsourcing?	18
Technical partners	18
An internal team	19
4. THE PERFECT IS THE ENEMY OF THE GOOD	21
Starting one step at a time...	21
... and continuing one step after another	21
5. PUTTING TOGETHER THE <i>MASTER DEI TALENTI NEOLAUREATI</i> PROJECT	23
Starting early...	23
... but where to start from?	24
Which scholarships for what degrees?	24
The research for and selection of partner organizations	25
From the first contact to the <i>gentleman's agreement</i>	27
The call for applications process	29
The internship profiles	30
Determining the scholarship grant's amount	31
The application form	32

6. SELECTING THE CANDIDATES	34
A shared selection	34
The first step: who is not eligible	35
Second phase/1: the evaluation grids	36
Second phase/2: comparing candidatures	37
The <i>peer evaluation</i> system	38
Completing the selections	39
7. MASTER DEI TALENTI: COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES	42
Why communicate?	42
Image and <i>claim</i>	43
The macro-campaign	43
The micro-campaign	44
8. MANAGING THE INTERNSHIPS: ACTIVATION, ASSISTANCE, FOLLOW-UP	47
Prior to departure	47
Visas	47
Insurance coverage	48
Assistance and monitoring	48
The <i>follow-up</i>	49
9. THE MASTER DEI TALENTI COMMUNITY	51
Building a <i>community</i>	51
The past <i>Master dei Talenti</i> grant beneficiaries	52
10. SURVEYING THE WINNERS – AN OVERVIEW	53
The survey	53
Description of the sample	53
Employment rate	53
The satisfaction	54
Attempting a comparison	55
Final considerations	58

## 1. What is the *Master dei Talenti* project?

### History of the *Master dei Talenti Neolaureati* project

*Master dei Talenti* was born in 2003 as an “umbrella project” for a series of training initiatives for young people of Piedmont and Valle d’Aosta, the operational territory of Fondazione CRT, which has created, funded and managed the project.

Within the many articulations of the project *Master dei Talenti (M.d.T.)*, it was decided from the very beginning to create a branch reserved to the recently graduated who wish to undertake an internship experience abroad through a scholarship awarded from Fondazione CRT. It was the beginning of the *Master dei Talenti Neolaureati*.

The first call for applications devoted to graduates was born toward the end of 2004, after an incubation period of a few months. Fifteen internships were offered and *M.d.T.* received 145 applications for them.



#### A SOLID FRAMEWORK

A lot has changed from the structure of the first initiative, but the core framework of the project and its application and selection process has remained the same as the original one. It was a structure born thanks to a pre-existing point of reference for the *Master dei Talenti*: the European project Leonardo da Vinci, which nowadays has become a specific component within the community action plan in the field of Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP). It was created in 1995 with the aim of “applying a professional training policy in the European Union’s Member States, improving its quality, supporting innovative actions and finding new learning methodologies.” Among the many initiatives of the Leonardo Project, the transnational mobility programs involving internships for young people are the ones that served as inspiration for the creation of the *M.d.T.* project.

The second call for applications, issued during the summer of 2005, presented itself as a completion of the first one and was more oriented toward scientific degrees than its predecessor, which targeted the humanities. From 2006 on, the calls for application have taken place on a yearly basis.

The *M.d.T.* call for applications is issued every year in the month of February, and is targeted to those students who graduated during the previous calendar year.

Year after year, the number of internships available, as well as the number of applicants, has increased,

until reaching an equilibrium point of 70-80 internships each year. Between 2003 and 2009, Fondazione CRT’s overall investment to the *Master dei Talenti Neolaureati* project totaled over 6 million euros.

### Why the name “*Master dei Talenti*”?

While the name of the project (“master”) evokes the concept of a *post lauream* learning experience, the *Master dei Talenti (M.d.T.)* borrows only its name from it. As a matter of fact, it presents itself as an alternative to the academic activity: it usually does not offer the typical classroom academic experience and theoretical background (except for a few exceptional cases); in its place,

it always offers a direct “on the field” training opportunity abroad and the experience gained by working in a company side by side with the company’s tutor.

Specifically, the project consists of a call for applications issued yearly that presents a list of internships located abroad on any of the five continents. The graduate only has to select the internships for which he or she feels more qualified for, and then present the application for it.

But why abroad?

Because, for the personal and professional growth, a simple degree obtained perhaps at the closest university nearby can no longer suffice. Instead, it must be completed with a wider outlook on the world, with an experience that is not only professional but also human, that takes place in environments that are different from the ones young graduates are used to.

Talent must be cultivated, and we chose nurture it by making unique training opportunities accessible to everyone who deserves them, regardless of their economic background.

The project’s history allows us to assert that this does not mean promoting the brain drain. On the contrary, it means bringing fresh oxygen to these young brains, most of whom choose to return to their place of origin to bring back new ideas – that is, if these places are able to welcome and valorize these talents, but this is another story.

Several years after the beginning of the project, it was decided to write down black on white the entire development of the *M.d.T.* project, thus handing the good practices born within Fondazione CRT over to those who may wish to repeat and develop a similar project in their own territory.



#### MASTER DEI TALENTI PROJECT IN FIGURES

In the 2004-2010 period, a total of 388 internships have been offered through the project. Of these, 15 were from the first call for applications (issued in 2004), 24 were from the second selection (summer 2005), 53 from the one in 2006, 74 in 2007, 80 in 2008, 67 in 2009, and 75 in 2010.

The number of internships offered depends not only on the budget available, but also on the quality and on the validity of the internship proposals presented by partner organizations and companies.

## 2. Regulations on internships

### General framework

A clear idea of *what is* an internship from a legal perspective is necessary to create a project offering internship opportunities. We do not want to give the company or the intern a misleading picture: the labor law is a complex and delicate field, and the sanctions for companies misusing work relationships (or the like) can be strict.

Having a clear understanding of what an internship is means being informed on the laws and regulations regarding the subject in order to understand, for example: what an internship is, how to activate one and who to involve, the rights and duties of an intern, and so on.

And that's not all of it. The *Master dei Talenti (M.d.T.)* offers two kinds of internship:

- internships that are carried out for a minor part in Italy and for the other part abroad;
- internships that are carried out entirely abroad.

We must therefore take into account the possibility of regulations that differ from the ones found in Italy.

Over time, the *M.d.T.* project has progressively reduced the number of internships that involve a period in Italy, preferring training opportunities entirely abroad.

### Current Italian regulations

The Italian regulations referring to the subject are found in Law No. 196 from 1997 and the respective Ministerial Decree No. 142 from 1998. Knowing the regulations' text, however, is not enough to guarantee a correct functioning. A series of factors must also be taken in consideration: for instance, the legal text may not be univocal (and thus be interpreted differently); or regional laws could affect the matter; there is also some governmental documentation that provides a correct interpretation of the norm.

An important reference can be the local labor bureau of inspections, the employment offices, or other specialized agencies located within local institutions. Even the universities' "career offices" can provide some information. Or, if you deem it necessary, see a career counselor or a labor consultant.

The following information is drawn from the aforementioned national regulations and from their respective concrete interpretation.



#### THE REGULATIONS CAN CHANGE!

From year to year, check whether these regulations have changed.

Even the mere interpretation of it can change through the years.

### What is an internship?



#### AN INTERN IS NOT A STAFF MEMBER!

This detail must be clear both to the company and the candidate, so that no one can make unfounded claims or raise inopportune issues.

This is one of the aspects that must be clear from the very beginning between the counterparts, in order to avoid misunderstandings.

Internships (also known by the French term *stage*) are "periods alternating learning and working in the context of a training process". They are carried out with the purpose of "facilitating professional choices through a direct exposure to the work field". In other words, the internship is another formative experience. According to the Italian law, it can take place during various times of the academic

career, from high school to undergraduate and graduate degrees. Moreover, there are different types of internship: there are, for example, even internships for people between jobs or unemployed. For the *Master dei Talenti Neolaureati*, one must first have a look at the internships that are related to the academic field chosen.

The partner organization, agency or company hosting the internship may be public or private. For simplicity's sake, from hereon we will refer to it as a "company", referred also to public entities, international organizations and, in general, any office able to host an intern.

### How long can an internship last, and what other restraints are there?

Regarding the length of an internship, the following duration rules apply: "Internships can not last more than twelve months for university students, including those undertaking an undergraduate or graduate degree, a PhD, or those attending postgraduate schools or specialization courses, even non universitarian, even in the eighteen months upon completion of their studies" (art. 7 M.D. no. 142, 1998).

The most recent interpretation of this norm formulated by the Italian Ministry of Labor (as anticipated, we refer to the Italian rules; for the specific application on your projects, please refer to rules of your home country and/or of the country where each internship takes place) has clarified that a university student may carry out an internship which can last at most twelve months, or more in the case of a graduate, as long as the project related to the agreement is different for each course of study.

Summing up, with reference to each academic background, it is possible to carry out:

- an internship lasting no more than 12 months during the course of the studies;
- an internship lasting no more than 12 months after the attainment of a degree, as long as it begins within the 18 months following the completion of the studies (and as long as the internship project proposed is different from one accomplished during a prior internship).

Employers can host interns within specific numeric limits based on the ratio between the number of full-time employees and interns. For example, companies with only five staff members can



have no more than one intern (cf. art. 1 M.D. no. 142, 1998).

Even this specific aspect must be cross-referenced with the regulations issued by each Region, which have further codified this norm.

In the case of part of the internship being carried out in Italy, therefore, you will have to:

- when creating the application form, keep in mind the time limits for the internship (as well as other potential restraints) to find the criteria of admissibility;
- ask the company to commit itself to respect the regulations.

### How is an internship activated and who must be involved in the process?

To activate an internship the signatures of an *internship agreement* and of a *training project* are essential. Article 4 of the aforementioned Ministerial Decree (M.D. no. 142) states: “the internships are carried out based on the related conventions or agreements stipulated between the sponsoring subjects and the public or private employing agencies. The convention related to the internship program must be accompanied by a training project for each intern”. The article continues with a series of guidelines concerning the content of these agreements.

But who are the partners promoting an internship? They are institutions (like universities, for example) to which the law assigns the task of promoting the activation of an internship. These are basically entities that can sign the internship agreement. This professional opportunity, in fact, is not just about starting a work relationship: the involvement of the university of origin of the graduate (or of another entity which can, according to the law, guarantee for the content of the training project) is directly related to the educational and professional nature of the experience. For the companies interested and eligible to apply as supporting partners, please refer to the list found in M.D. no. 142 art. 2.

Finally, to apply to the *M.d.T.* project, we will need the support of a third party, not required by law (which does not explicitly refer to scholarship-funded internships) but is nevertheless necessary: the organization funding the scholarships (which will be discussed further on).

### Rights and responsibilities of the host organization and of the intern

Italian national laws spell out some of the rights and duties of the host company/organization and of the intern, but there are a few shortcomings in terms of the relation between the two of them. They do not specify, for instance, how many working hours the intern may undergo, how many days off an intern can have or how they are distributed, and so on. Nor does it give precise



*A COMPANY INTENDING PART OF THE INTERNSHIP TO BE CARRIED OUT IN YOUR HOME COUNTRY HAS TO DECLARE, FROM THE VERY FIRST AGREEMENT, TO KNOW AND UPHOLD THE REGULATIONS OF YOUR HOME COUNTRY (NATIONAL AND REGIONAL) ON THE MATTER.*

As diligent as you may be in making sure of fulfilling all the requirements, the company must commit itself for the parts concerning it (respecting the employees/interns ratio, communications concerning them with the Center for competent employment, etc.).

guidelines about scholarship-funded internships.

The gaps are easily explainable: the relation is not a work-based one, so many aspects of it are not codified. Similarly, the company does not have an obligation to pay the intern for his or her work.

For the project's purposes, however, we have to clarify a few aspects: for instance, the working engagement is full-time (considering the substantial amount provided by the scholarship), the intern has to be granted some days off work, he or she cannot receive “overtime,” and so on.

### What about foreign regulations?

All we have said thus far applies to the Italian context. Italian laws will be rigorously applied for that portion of the internship that is carried out in Italy.

The internships, however, will be mostly (if not entirely) carried out abroad. What regulations are applied in that case? The answer changes a little, depending on:

- whether the internship is carried out both in Italy and abroad; in that case, the internship will be divided into two phases:
  - phase 1 (the Italian portion): Italian laws will be applied, along with the corresponding internship agreement and training project;
  - phase 2 (the portion abroad): foreign regulations will apply for this portion, with the corresponding “equivalent” of the internship agreement (which will be discussed shortly).
- whether the internship is completely carried out abroad; in that case, foreign regulations apply.

But which foreign regulations? This basically means the domestic laws of the country (or countries) where the host company works. The hosting organization must provide the information on its specific national regulations on the matter (since every country has different rules concerning internships). Have the partner organizations examined beforehand the concrete possibility of hosting your intern and have them put down in a written agreement their commitment to respecting all the regulations applicable to internship activations? Remember to ask the same



#### *THE SCHOLARSHIP IS NOT A SALARY!*

Make this clear to the interns: what they are given is not a salary, but a “reimbursement of expenses”, which should allow them to go work abroad without having to resort to their own finances. Therefore, any comparison between the salaries of the host organization's employees and the intern would be inappropriate.



#### *“NEMO AD IMPOSSIBILIA TENETUR”: YOU CANNOT TAKE ON THE RESPONSIBILITY OF KNOWING ALL THE LAWS IN EVERY COUNTRY!*

In this, as in other cases (such as obtaining the visas), you will have to demand that the partner companies fulfill their obligations assigned by their national legislation.

information from extraterritorial entities, like embassies or United Nations agencies.

A complex situation could arise: a host organization could declare itself interested in hosting an



**COMPANIES AND ORGANIZATIONS MIGHT HAVE STRICT INTERNAL PROCEDURES GOVERNING INTERNSHIPS**

Ask for specific information on the matter. For instance, a company might:

- have a maximum duration of 6 months for their internships;
- not host any interns;
- not be allowed to have two interns at the same time;
- prefer having only volunteers (as is the case with some UN agencies).

These restrictions might be ground for some unfortunate surprises when activating an internship.

intern in its Italian offices and then send him or her to one or more of its foreign offices (as it does with its own employees). In this case, Italian laws will apply, but the host organization will have to take the responsibility of getting information on the possibility of hosting an Italian intern in their offices abroad, also for insurance purposes. The type of questions to ask the company are the following: what would the French counterpart of the labor bureau of inspections say if it were to find that an Italian intern (an Italian national who, under Italian law, qualifies as

an intern) is working in the company's French offices? And what if this intern were injured while in France? And so on.

If the company is unable to provide enough elements concerning these issues in the agreement, do not accept the partnership.

Reject the partnership also if they suggest incorporating in their offices a position different from that of an intern (for instance, it could occur that the organization, unable to host an intern per se, suggests including the grant recipient as a full-time employee, a consultant, or a volunteer, etc.).

Even though Italian law does not apply to an internship convention, before starting the internship you should nevertheless demand that the organization sign a specific agreement that establishes the company's and the intern's reciprocal responsibilities (which would follow and be distinct from the agreement which will be discussed later on: the contract used to stipulate the partnership between you and the partner organization). This will no longer be a document required by Italian law to activate an internship; it will be an agreement protecting the parties (the intern's name must be indicated clearly) and that will have to be saved as proof of the correct activation of the program, which also marks the beginning of the scholarship disbursement.

**IN CONCLUSION:**

- Have a solid understanding of what an internship is from a legal point of view; get precise information on the norms and regulations (what is an internship? how is it activated and who must be involved in the process? what are an intern's rights and duties?).
- Also pay attention to regional norms and to ministerial documentation providing a correct interpretation of the law. Regulations and their interpretations might change from year to year, so stay updated.
- Keep in mind time and duration limits (along with other potential limitations) when creating the call for applications, so as to identify admissibility criteria. From the agreement on, the company has to declare to know and respect the regulations on the matter.
- The internship does not imply a work relationship: the scholarship is not a salary, but a "reimbursement of expenses"; if some aspects are not codified by law (i.e. work hours), ask to write them down in the report with partner companies.
- It is not possible to take on the responsibility of knowing all the laws of every country. It is necessary that partner companies and organizations commit themselves to fulfill their obligations as assigned to them by their national legislation.
- Signatures of an internship agreement (or convention) are necessary to activate a scholarship and a training experience. If the company does not fall under Italian law, ask them to sign this convention (or a similar agreement) before starting the internship (NB: this is a second agreement, different from the one which will be discussed later on).

### 3. Managing the project

#### Internal management or outsourcing?

What is the best way to manage the project? Outsource as much as possible and only take care of coordinating between the various task holders? Or outsource as little as possible, setting up an internal team to have a more capillary control over the project?

With the first option, there is the risk of losing some control over the project, thereby reducing the perception of the criticality that the situation could present moment by moment. Moreover, it also entails higher management costs.

If choosing the second option and everything is managed “at home”, the risk lies in having to set up a sizeable team of multidisciplinary skills that might turn out to be cumbersome and sluggish.

The solution chosen by *Master dei Talenti (M.d.T.)* is a compromise between the two, characterized by a tendency of centralizing the project’s core components and outsourcing certain operations that, while fundamental, are nevertheless of secondary importance (i.e. the requirements for the scholarship disbursement).

#### Technical partners

Several fundamental components were handed over to external entities:

- disbursement of scholarships, with all the fiscal aspects and any possible reimbursement (i.e. for expenditures encountered in acquiring insurance coverage, which will be discussed later on);
- activation of the internship via an internship agreement. This implies not only keeping in touch with all the interns, but also with the companies to ensure the internship is being correctly activated.

These tasks could not have been entirely carried out by Fondazione CRT itself because:

- it lacked the competence (legally speaking, intended as the power and the authority granted to a certain subject) to sign on the internship agreement. The convention, in fact, must be signed by the applicant’s university of origin (or by a subject qualified to do so) and by the host agency/company/organization.
- of all the technical and administrative requirements related to disbursing scholarships.

Fondazione CRT therefore identified one entity possessing all the necessary competences to carry out these tasks: the Committee for University-Business Research and Training (*Comitato per la Ricerca e la Formazione Università-Impresa*, or CORFUI). In case it is not possible to find a similar organization, there are other companies which can be contacted instead, such as the universities to activate internship agreements. The technical partner for the scholarships’ disbursement can be a company competent in fiscal matters, human resources and issuing “pay checks.”

#### An internal team

As for the other aspects, the project management of the *Master dei Talenti Neolaureati* is assigned to a small internal team. It is necessary that it be lean and flexible, with no more than four or five people. They must be able to seize the salient components needed during the planning and management stages of the project: from legal and fiscal elements, to a close look at the universities and the companies, etc. It is important that the internal team be able to highlight the individual themes and issues to act upon.

For specific needs, an external technical support can be consulted to solve contingent issues or even to train the entire team on the matter.

In case of the *M.d.T.* project, we started off with a two-person team; this small team managed the first two calls for proposals and they maintained a managing and coordinating function, which was later supplemented with two more collaborators and a further person on communication strategies.

Fondazione CRT chose to incorporate two former scholarship holders because they were ideal candidates, given their age, education and training.

Those past grant beneficiaries were given the responsibility of managing the relations with partner organizations and new grant recipients, monitoring the internships for potential problems and carrying out follow-up

activities. The entire team, moreover, was involved in the crucial stage of pre-selection (an activity that, as we will see later, was chosen to not be outsourced).

External support is sought when drafting the internship conventions/agreements, to distribute the scholarship sums, to collect attendance sheets, to create a communication strategy and its tools, and so on.



#### KNOW FOREIGN LANGUAGES!

It is fundamental that the people involved in running the project know one or more foreign languages (among which English is essential).



#### WORKING GROUPS? SMALLER IS BETTER

Skilled and fast-paced decision making processes: don’t set up excessively large working groups or task forces.

## 4. The perfect is the enemy of the good

### Starting one step at a time...

Now that we've finished the information on "how to lay the foundations to build the project", we'd like to take a moment to emphasize how it is (obviously) impossible to build a perfect call for applications without having to change it again in the future.

Whoever would like to replicate a project like *Master dei Talenti Neolaureati (M.d.T.)* should be prepared to proceed gradually, one step at a time, keeping in mind the following factors:

- the first call for applications should not involve that many internships (an ideal initial number would be between 10 and 20);
- it is difficult to start from the very beginning partnerships with big names (which do not necessarily translate into quality internships);
- it may be difficult to start a first edition of the project with only internships abroad.

As Voltaire once said, and as the Italian saying goes, "the perfect is the enemy of the good". So we suggest starting gradually, working at the maximum of your potential with the first edition (which will obviously be the most challenging one to set up), but without expecting perfection from the first call for applications or you will run the risk of procrastinating forever.

In conclusion, to start up the first edition, you will first have to take some time to: find the technical partners to help you manage the project; set up an internal team to run it; clarify any doubts about the regulations; establish a maximum budget.

Once this initial phase is over, give yourselves a deadline: the date when the call for application will be issued to the public. Keep in mind that you will need time to find partner organizations, but that these companies might need the intern within a short time thereafter. Overall, from the first contact with the first company to the final deadline (when the applications are issued), it should take about four months to work on a first call for applications.

### ... and continuing one step after another

Every edition of the project should learn from the new and unforeseeable critical issues that may rise with every project, based upon which it will have to accordingly modify the text of the agreement, of the convention to activate an internship, and so on. As we will see, issues may rise in every project:

- partner organizations may not respect the agreement;
- the internship, in substance, may not be in line with what was initially agreed upon;
- the interns' behavior may not be coherent with the commitment undertaken in the application or when signing the internship acceptance (i.e. last minute withdrawals, unjustified internship interruption, etc.);
- various unforeseen circumstances (i.e. changes in the rules, regulations or interpretations of the laws concerning internships).

#### IN CONCLUSION:

- The right combination of internal management and outsourcing is very important: some technical functions will have to be carried out externally (i.e. scholarships' disbursements, their activations via internship agreements, etc.).
- Build a lean and flexible team that knows foreign languages and is able to seize in a timely fashion the important aspects and issues of the project (which is why involving a former scholarship/internship holder could turn out to be a good choice).

In view of this:

- some partnerships may change from one year to another: for example, do not represent internship experiences in “disappointing” companies and keep on seeking new partnerships to add to the list;
- as time passes, you may decide to move the entire project abroad: at that point, partner companies may no longer be allowed to have part in the training experience in Italy, or this portion may be limited to only a few, clearly defined cases of brief duration;
- include new documents (i.e. for the *M.d.T.* project, we added a disciplinary specification, binding the interns to comply to certain basic rules from the moment the internship is accepted on).

In conclusion, while you may not wish to start with a perfect call for application, you should never stop perfecting the project.

#### IN CONCLUSION:

- You should start working one step at a time: putting together the project and the first call for applications will be challenging and the result will not be perfect, nor will it be for the following editions!
- It is useful to learn from the critical issues and improve the project accordingly, year after year.

## 5. Putting together the *Master dei Talenti Neolaureati* project

### Starting early...

The work to put together a project like *Master dei Talenti Neolaureati* (*M.d.T.*) begins a few months before its publication.

It is important to start with a clear deadline in mind: the date when the call for applications will be issued and available to the recently graduated students. *M.d.T.* usually publishes its call for applications every year on February 1<sup>st</sup>; the applications are to be turned in within the end of the month. As we will see, the candidates can apply only within this timeframe through the on-line application form.

As a rule of thumb, start working on the project four months before it is due for publication. The *Master dei Talenti Neolaureati* preliminary phase usually starts after the summer and finishes in mid January.

A significant portion of this preliminary phase is devoted to finding and contacting the right companies and organizations that may wish to participate in the project by making one or two internships available at their premises. The application form will not be a generic invitation to apply to the project, but a very detailed list of internships available to recently graduated students; when preparing the application process, the objective is therefore to provide the exact definition of each internship position offered.

When the preliminary work begins, establish some intermediate deadlines. There are many tasks to be carried out, the companies’ response times can vary substantially and there are several documents and binding agreements that need to be signed by each company/organization and ready by the time the application is published.

Some examples of intermediate deadlines include:

- November 20<sup>th</sup>: deadline by which the companies can adhere to the project and submit all the information related to the internship position available at their premises (prepare a form for them to fill out, so that the relevant information can then be included in the agreement);
- December 15<sup>th</sup>: date by which the partnership (agreement) has to be sealed with the signatures of both parties (for the *M.d.T.* project, the signatories are Fondazione CRT and the host company/organization).



#### FLEXIBILITY YES OR NO?

A certain amount of flexibility toward some companies/organizations will be needed, particularly in cases when, at an advanced stage of the process, a new partner is contacted. In these instances, some extra time may be given to the partners interested in participating to evaluate the rules and regulations entailed.

But be careful: flexibility has to be awarded on the basis of justified reasons. Otherwise, chasing after companies that are too slow in responding may turn out to be the first step in setting up an internship program that will turn out to be “uncertain” or “problematic” even during the activation phase.

There are always a few positions that may still appear as open or “uncertain” after December 15<sup>th</sup>, but it is important that these cases be as few as possible. In any case, the preliminary phase should be concluded at the latest 15-20 (calendar) days before the call for applications is published. As February 1<sup>st</sup> approaches, many things will need some fine-tuning. It is ill advised to draw out the negotiations with the partners to just a few days before the final deadline; moreover, a certain amount of time has to be set aside to write the application, which should include a presentation of the project, the eligibility requirements, as well as the specific provisions for each internship profile (every training position must be accompanied by a separate form containing a detailed description of that internship's characteristics, the specific requirements and skills sought after).

### ... but where to start from?



#### THE SCHOLARSHIP BUDGET

To estimate the project's budget, quantify the amount of each scholarship (monthly allowance for the number of months). The scholarship amounts, however, vary according to the destinations. When planning a budget, therefore, use an average scholarship amount and be cautious.

N.B. The budget we are referring to here does not include the expenses necessary to set up the entire call for applications project; this budget here only indicates how much money the scholarship component is worth (or, how much will be disbursed just through scholarships).

To put together a call for applications, before evaluating the potential partner companies and organizations, make an assessment of the previous editions: what worked? and what didn't? In other words, treasure the lessons learnt from the previous editions. Past experiences can be helpful at any stage of the process: from finding the right partner companies, to drafting the documents and the call for application, and so on. Another crucial element when stating a project is making an estimate of the resources available. A clear

budget plan will avoid the risk of involving too many companies compared to the number of internships that can actually be offered through the project.

Generally speaking, experience tells us that about 10% of the internships offered are not activated for a series of reasons (sometimes notwithstanding the company's will). This, however, does not entail a reduced budget: the actual availability of each position offered through the project will have to be checked, and a budget slightly higher than the bare necessities will help in the long run in case of contingencies or issues arising during the project.

### Which scholarships for what degrees?

In order to figure out how to put the project together and what partner organizations to contact (or accept), there is first another overall decision to make regarding what type of internships to offer. The project should offer these training opportunities to the widest possible range of recent graduates.

The first calls for applications may be less “refined,” but, as time passes and wisdom increases,

the “chiseling” of the types of internships offered will become more and more accurate.

Avoid offering many scholarships in niche academic sectors, which have a lower number of alumni per year. For instance, four internships for enologists out of a total of 25 positions are too many.

Moreover, it is important to slow down the rush for the profiles commonly sought after (traditionally represented by engineering and economics/business backgrounds) also by facilitating companies looking for other types of degrees that are less common in the employment market.

Furthermore, lessons can be learned from the previous internship projects and calls for applications: the objective is to assess whether and how many internships should be made available to each academic field. The applicants will be divided by field of study: if, for example, the candidates with scientific degrees (physics, biology, biotechnology, etc.) were fewer than the number of candidates with economic degrees, then consider offering more internship positions to the latter. Basing the number of positions available on the distribution of last year students per academic field could help somewhat, but it does not necessarily mean that every category of graduates will be equally interested in participating.

When reprogramming the project, remember what degrees were unable to find a space in the previous editions because there were no partner organizations or there was a lack of interest on their behalf.

### The research for and selection of partner organizations

And now, it's time to select partner companies and organizations.

The first edition of the project will be the most challenging one. Start by looking at firms or institutions (both smaller and bigger ones) you are already familiar and in contact with. Alternatively, you may ask an employers' organization or union working in the area.

You may also wish to consider companies or organizations with which you are not in direct contact: a few challenges may arise (particularly in the case of a large company) if there isn't an intermediary party or a precedent within the organization. The most common issues are due to difficulties in identifying, contacting, and getting the right people within the organization chart interested in the project so that they may become a point of reference for the project development.

It is possible (and perhaps even desirable) for the first edition of the project to involve even just a



#### COMPLEX DYNAMICS

The number of applicants per internship doesn't necessarily follow clear dynamics. For example, it is true that the graduates holding “less popular” degrees in the job market tend to have more enthusiasm than other degree holders. Nevertheless, internship positions that appear interesting on paper, can also result in significant discrepancies, some of which receive only minor attention, while others are literally assaulted. And all this may happen despite your expectancies or calculations. And perhaps, in the following edition, the situation of that very same internship position may be completely overturned...

handful of partner organizations.

The question arises for the following calls for applications: would it be better to keep the same partner organizations or to change them? The answer lies between the two; it is advisable:

- on the one hand, to ensure a certain amount of renewal to the project; this can also be applied to the yearly rotation of the organizations issuing the scholarships/internships (particularly if they have similar project profiles);
- while on the other hand, to eliminate the internship positions that did not work out well.

The search for partner organizations should therefore be continued along different channels from the second year on.

Scholarship beneficiaries (both current and past ones) are crucial components when choosing possible partner companies, particularly for their evaluations of the previous edition's partnerships. In fact, when the process for activating a new edition of the project starts, the preceding one is usually still ongoing. Scholarship holders have the tools to ascertain from the inside the quality of a position and the company's credibility. A questionnaire filled out during the internship may be used to assess how the training experience is going, its strengths and weaknesses, whether the scholarship amount was appropriate, and so on. This monitoring activity may be useful to intercept potential issues in time and to help when deciding whether to renew the partnership with the host organization for the following edition (scholarship holders, for instance, are specifically asked whether they would renew that internship position for future candidates or not). All this will result in a first list of organizations to contact selected from amongst the best ones from the previous call for applications.

Former grant recipients can also play an important role when searching for new partnerships. Their ability to become promoters or "ambassadors" of the project is one of the added values of the *Master dei Talenti Neolaureati*. Throughout the years, those who benefited from these scholarships have continued pointing out other interesting initiatives encountered during or after their internship. Who better than a past scholarship beneficiary could explain the project to company's leaders, proving the project's strengths and reliability?

Many past scholarship holders have promoted the project in their new workplaces. And several of them have become the points of reference for the *M.d.T.* with the new partner organizations. Their role isn't accidental: it presupposes the existence of a *community* of people who, having benefited from the experience, continue to feel like a part of it. This sense of *community* will be



#### OBLIGATION OF EMPLOYMENT?

A further element to consider when evaluating previous editions' partnerships can be drawn from the interest showed by the company/organization toward the intern through a job offer following the internship period. Keep in mind that the company is not compelled to do so; if, however, it chooses to hire the intern, this may be a sign of the company's reliability or of their perception of the project as a source of budding talents.

discussed later on.

Partner companies and organizations telling other entities about the project are another good way to find new contacts. Moreover, as the project consolidates itself through time, companies interested in hosting one or more internships will contact the project coordinators directly.

### From the first contact to the *gentleman's agreement*

Once you have an initial list, intermediate and final deadlines, you will have to organize the items necessary to establish the partnerships. They will have to be both in Italian and in English.

*M.d.T.* has put together two separate "packages":

- one for new potential partners, with all the useful information to understand the initiative. It will have to explain where the project comes from, who is promoting it, who is participating, how it works, and the selection procedures for the scholarship applicants;
- and one for current partners, containing fewer details: it will just be a reminder of the procedures to follow and it will illustrate the developments, innovations and changes in the project.



#### "MORE INFORMATION FEWER PROBLEMS"

When preparing the gentleman's agreement, add any detail, even the less relevant ones. Don't forget, for instance, to mention what party will be responsible for potential expenditures involved with getting a visa or a work permit, training costs, etc. All this will avoid unpleasant misunderstandings once the internship is activated about who has to pay what.

Each package will also contain the agreement document, to be signed by the partner company/organization and by the project promoter.

The agreement is an essential document to understand the reciprocal engagements, which are the basis to ensure the project's proper functioning. It won't be a generic text: it will contain specific aspects relating to the type of internship involved (premises, duration, objectives, activities). Specifically, the agreement will establish:

- the commitment taken by the project-promoting party (in this case, Fondazione CRT) to invest the economic resources necessary to finance the scholarships that will be given directly to the candidates selected;
- the commitment taken by the company/organization hosting the internship to make these positions available and to provide adequate assistance to the scholarship holders in terms of training and supervision. The internships should provide a real training experience of personal improvement and professional growth, integrating their academic background with a highly professionalized opportunity. The hosting organizations will play a key role in this, committing themselves to physically host the intern, but also to include him or her in the company's activities, to train, inform, instruct, and increase the intern's knowledge and skills;



- an accurate description of the internship (with a specific list of objectives and activities for the intern) and of the candidate's requirements (type of degree, graduate studies, linguistic and computer skills, and other aptitudes or skills);
- a series of rules governing the internship, such as: work hours, what equipment the host company will have to provide, potential work-related travel expenses foreseen during the internship, and the company's internship benefits (accommodation support, meal tickets, public transportation cost concessions, training or language courses, or if they cover a round-trip fare to the company's city). You may decide whether to demand that basic benefits be available to the intern as a sort of "co-payment" for the internship, or whether to leave it all up to the host organization;
- the selection process for the intern usually involves both the promoting partner and the host organization (as is the case for *M.d.T.*);
- the promoting partner's intention to monitor the internship's progress with periodic surveys;
- the power of not activating or of interrupting the internship in case of the partner's severe noncompliance or in case of impediments to activating or continuing the project.

If the internship will take place in a country where a visa is required, the agreement should also include a section for companies and organizations to describe the type of visa needed to enter the country and the documents and timeframe necessary to obtain it. The company's assistance is crucial in getting the visa, but it is also important that these procedures are known beforehand, to avoid delays and complications once the intern candidate has been selected. The *Master dei Talenti* has taught us that companies sometimes underestimate these procedures: they tend to focus on activating the internship in a short time, neglecting the process



#### EXPLAIN YOUR ROLE IN THE PRE-SELECTIONS

The host company doesn't necessarily have to explain in the agreement its selection procedures, unless you think it would be useful. Set, however, a deadline for the company to complete its selection. On the other hand, your procedure for pre-selecting candidate should be included, along with how the process is managed and when will it be concluded by.



#### URGE PARTNER COMPANIES TO HURRY!

In preparing the gentleman's agreement, we suggest urging the partner company/organization to hurry, so that they choose their intern candidates in a short time. The candidates (particularly the most qualified ones) will not wait forever to hear back from the partner, since they will also be looking at other host organizations in the project and they will keep on looking for jobs. A company that is too slow in turning in its selection results might no longer find those candidates available.

the intern should follow to acquire the right visa to enter the country. For instance, tourist visas usually do not cover internships and some States do not allow people holding that kind of visa to work. Some assistance from the host company in searching for the right visa will therefore avoid issues arising later on.

Three people from the company will be needed to carry out the project and its activation:

- the company's legal representative, who will also be the one signing the agreement;
- a project coordinator: a focal person inside the company or someone working in its human resources department;
- a company tutor: someone who will follow the scholarship recipient throughout the internship, usually working in the same unit or work group. The agreement should specifically demand that there be a mentor for every office location where the intern will work (the intern should always be working side by side with someone who knows the nature of the project).

Finally, the agreement will change slightly depending on:

- whether there is only one partner company/organization, and the internship will take place in only one office;
- whether there is only one partner with two or more offices (in the same or in different countries) where the internship will take place;
- whether there are two or more international partners hosting the same intern. This case is less frequent, but not unusual, envisaging a change not only of office location, but also of country. In these circumstances, the intern experiences two different, but closely connected realities, be it with commercial partners or with companies brought together in a consortium by common interests. In this case, both companies will participate in the selection process, and both will host and train the intern.

The agreement will have to be signed before the call for applications is issued (see paragraph "Starting early...").

### The call for applications process

Setting up a call for applications is like putting a big puzzle together. The companies' profiles and the descriptions of the internship positions (sent by the partners and contained in the agreement) are the most substantial part of the application in terms of number of pages (generally, one page for each position available); they are accompanied by the eligibility requirements, and the terms and conditions to present one's candidature. The internship forms will be discussed later on; here we will focus on the rules and process of the call for applications.

First of all, select and describe the eligibility requirements to apply to the project: age limits, final grades (or grade point average), time and geographic restraints.

The *M.d.T.* project, for instance, only takes students from universities in Piedmont and Valle



d'Aosta; the age limits are: 24 for students holding an undergraduate degree and 27 for students with a graduate degree.

We are building a call for applications for recently graduated students, so we will have to set two time limits (from when and to when) to access the project:

- *a quo* limit: for instance, every year the *M.d.T.* project (which opens in February) is intended for students who obtained their degree after January 1<sup>st</sup> of the previous calendar year (i.e. the 2010 call for applications is open to students who graduated after January 1, 2009);
- *ad quem* limit: the *M.d.T.* project accepts applications of students who will have graduated by the end of that academic year (while other versions of this project could select only people who graduated before the call for applications, or will do so by December 31<sup>st</sup> of that year).

Also consider some categories of exclusion for those applicants who:

- already have a full time job, internship (or the like) with the partner company offering the internship position the candidate is applying to;
- have won a previous *M.d.T.* internship position (which could happen to graduate candidates who had participated in the undergraduate version of the project);
- have won a previous edition of the project, but interrupted the internship early and without sound reasons.

An easy way to collect the candidatures is through an online application. Each candidate should be able to apply to several of the internships offered (possibly no more than five, so as to avoid complications during the selection process, which will be discussed later on).

### The internship profiles

Each profile referring to each internship position available through the project should contain information to help the candidates choose what they should apply to: what city and country will it take place in; how long the internship will last; the scholarship amount; the objectives of this training experience, and the activities and assignments involved; when the internship starts and whether there are benefits provided by the host organization.

The profile should also contain indications on what kind of candidate the host company is looking for (degree type and level, linguistic and computer skills, etc.) In the case of *M.d.T.*, minimum grades for applicants (constituting one of the eligibility criteria) are decided by Fondazione CRT,



#### CHOOSING THE AD QUEM LIMIT

It is unlikely to find a deadline for the applications that satisfies all the potential candidates.

In some cases, students could be defending their thesis a few days before the deadline and, although belonging to the same graduation class as other students eligible to apply, they might have to participate to the next year's edition.

So the deadline chosen will anyhow be arbitrary: the important thing is to give everybody an opportunity to apply to at least one of the project's editions.

and not by the hosting entities. For *M.d.T.* scholarship applicants from scientific degrees (including engineering and medicine), the lowest grade is 95/110; while for degrees in humanities (including economics and architecture), the minimum is 105/110.

A useful way to establish a baseline such as this is to look at the number of possible candidates. For popular majors with many graduating students, a higher grade-requirement can become a way to start filtering the number of potential applicants long before the screening and selection processes begin.

We do not, however, suggest accepting only perfect scores: a high grade does not necessarily indicate a capacity to carry out an experience abroad such as the one offered by this type of project.

Finally, the profile should also provide an approximate starting date for the internship, by which the candidate will have to declare his or her availability. The beginning of the internship could be postponed a little; because of delays, or due to the selection procedures, or for organizational reasons, the host company could decide to push the intern's arrival back a few weeks. The candidate could also ask for a short delay if he or she were undergoing a period of notice for ending a previous job. Overall, the scholarship holder should be as available as possible to leave when the internship is to begin. Moreover, the scholarship holder should know (having signed the commitments when accepting the project's internship offer) that the departure cannot be delayed or interrupted for academic purposes (as will be discussed in a later section).

### Determining the scholarship grant's amount

How are the scholarship amounts determined? The monthly allotments vary from one position to another, based on the cost of living in the city and country where the internship takes place. The amounts will therefore be higher for capitals and large metropolitan cities, or, in the case of some developing countries with a lower cost-of-living index, to cover expenditures to ensure the candidate's safety and security.

The monthly allotment for the months spent in Italy will be roughly the same as that of a recent graduate's first employment contract. It would be wise to increase the scholarship budget to include travel expenses to and from the country of destination.

The *M.d.T.* project has determined to allot fixed monthly installments based on: the total scholarship amount (which could contain different monthly values according to the intern's country of destination, cost-of-living, or if part of the training is



#### THE SCHOLARSHIP IS NOT A SALARY (PART 2)

Keep reminding the scholarship holders that their scholarships grants are not a salary.

They should be perceived as ideal "reimbursement of expenses," created to allow anyone to live an internship period with dignity, without having to resort to other types of financial support (be it from the family or of some other kind).

This is why the monthly allotments can sometimes be very high: 3,300 euros (gross) in New York can be barely enough to cover rent, food and transportation costs!

done in Italy), divided by the number of months of the internship.

Every internship profile will therefore present a fixed scholarship amount in the call's text: the candidate will always receive the same amount. It could also happen that a grant beneficiary could continue to receive a fixed 2,550 euros a month throughout the internship, even though 6 months of the internship were in Brussels (for which he /she would be receiving 1,800 gross euros a month) and half in New York (which should be 3,300 euros a month). In doing so, the intern will have to display some financial management skills, while facilitating things for the entities disbursing the scholarships.

The *M.d.T.* scholarships are updated every year, according to the suggestions of past grant beneficiaries, who are specifically asked at the end of their training experience whether the amounts were appropriately sufficient or not.

In the information and application form you should clearly express two other important elements of the scholarship:

- the monthly allotments disbursed at the end of each month are enough to cover rent, living and travel expenses, etc.
- the scholarship values are expressed in gross amounts and are subject to taxes (the applicants may ask to know the net value beforehand, by calculating their own fiscal situation through a tax form, or by asking a financial adviser).

Finally, it would be a good idea to disburse the allotments upon receiving the attendance sheet signed monthly by the company mentor (a.k.a. the intern's tutor).

### The application form

The application form is the tool by which candidates apply to the project. For the *M.d.T.* project, this is an online application comprising:

- a first section with very specific fields, usually closed-answer questions or by filling in only a limited number of characters (personal data, information on the academic background, such as degree type, final grade, courses and exams taken, linguistic and computer skills);
- a second section for the candidate's résumé/CV (in Italian and in one or more foreign languages), where the applicants will be able to describe their profile, motivation and other relevant information. The CV can be added in several ways: through a single field for the entire résumé that can be freely written in (with a relatively large number of characters allowed), or by giving the candidates the possibility of uploading their own CV. Either way, the applicant will be allowed to structure his/her profile as they prefer. There is also a third option, guiding the creation of the profile through specific fields to fill in: academic background, experiences abroad, work experiences, foreign languages, computer skills, and so on. This last option has the advantage of allowing an easy comparison of the candidates' profiles during the selection phase.

Why are the CVs needed in a foreign language too? Mainly because foreign partner organizations and companies may have a hard time understanding an application form filled out in your language!

#### IN CONCLUSION:

- Start early: about four months before the call for application is published.
- Be flexible, but come up with a tight work schedule, urging partners to hurry up: there are many things to do and reaction times may vary from one company to another!
- If possible, start by having a look at previous project budgets: listen to both former scholarship holders and (particularly) current ones.
- Carefully put together the budget.
- Start with preexisting contacts and people who can promote the project in new companies or organizations (particularly if large).
- Constantly update the call for applications promoting the excellent positions, eliminating the ones that weren't that successful and maintaining a sort of rotation and variety of offers.
- Make clear and detailed forms (in your language and in English) for the companies to fill out to explain their internship offer: this will become part of the agreement confirming the reciprocal engagements concerning the project. This form should also be accompanied with information material for the companies interested in joining the project.
- When preparing the call for applications, choose some boundaries, such as age limits, graduation date, application deadlines, and so on; while they may not satisfy everyone, they will nevertheless offer the same opportunities.
- Be cautious and as detailed as possible when putting together the call for applications: "more information, fewer problems".
- The scholarship forms should clearly explain what is expected from the candidates; the forms should also be structured so as to allow an objective selection (academic grades are just a part, there are many other possible criteria to choose from!).
- Know the cost of living of the various cities and countries associated with the project and carefully determine the scholarship amounts, ensuring the recipient can live in dignity and safety without having to resort to other financial sources.
- The application form (preferably digital) should, on the one hand allow the candidates to explain all their potential, and on the other assist the selection phase through a quick and objective comparison of the applicants' profiles.

## 6. Selecting the candidates

### A shared selection

It is very important that the project and the call for applications be perceived as objective and transparent by the companies/organizations and by the candidates. The former will see it as a useful ally to attract and train qualified human capital; while the latter will participate with more enthusiasm. The project's mechanisms and procedures are fundamental to achieving this purpose. The selection process should be structured in:

- a first pre-selection phase carried out by the promoting entity (in this case, Fondazione CRT) based on certain criteria highlighted in the application form. The aim for this first phase is to shortlist the best candidate to present to the partner company;
- a second phase during which each partner organization can choose an intern among the pre-selected candidates. Companies can carry out this selection through their own preferred mechanisms (as long as it is done within a certain timeframe).

The selection is a crucial and delicate process; in order to work it needs:

- the information provided (during the agreement phase with the companies and reinserted in the internship profiles forms) should be clear, univocal and well-articulated: those performing the pre-selection should have enough information to shortlist in a way that corresponds to the original *desiderata*;
- both the promoting entity and the partners should have the right and duty to intervene in the process. If companies weren't allowed to have a say in the intern selections, they would perceive it as an imposition, since they are the ones investing time and resources in the intern's position, training and tutoring.

Why are pre-selections necessary?

First of all, to evaluate the profiles' conformity to the project's requirements and instructions: hundreds of people (all with different profiles and experiences) could apply to the project, and not

all of them might be in line with the application's criteria. The promoting entity should therefore screen the profiles so that all the pre-selected candidates fulfill the preliminary criteria.

Secondly, to locate the best profiles among those applying for each internship position. Therefore

pre-selections are not only useful to filter out the unqualified applications, but also (and especially) to open a second round of selection for the most qualified ones. A sound short-listing process will also contribute to strengthening the image of the project's excellence.

Lastly, this phase is necessary to give partner organizations a manageable number of applications: candidates could swarm to certain internship offers perceived as more prestigious. Thanks to the pre-selection, companies won't have to deal with hundreds

of application, but only with a handful of profiles (usually 10-12, at most).

### The first step: who is not eligible

As previously said, the first things to look for are the basic requirements to access the project. The ineligibilities should be unambiguously determined before the call for applications is issued. These could include: final grade, graduation date, application deadline, etc.

The applications containing one or more factors of inadmissibility (i.e. the candidate has a final grade lower than the minimum required by the project) will be screened out and no longer considered; even if the internship position were not assigned in the end, it would not be correct to

readmit those who, despite having applied to that offer, did not meet the formal requirements to be considered eligible. This would be unfair to those who chose not to apply to the project because they didn't have the prerequisites to do so. Furthermore, the selection process would be



#### WHAT IF THERE AREN'T ANY RIGHT PROFILES?

The internships don't necessarily have to be assigned: if the candidates don't fit the profile or they just don't measure up to what's required of them, the internship position can be voided.

During the selection phase, companies and organizations can reject the unsuitable profiles or annul the internship position, providing grounds for the decision: the project's objective is to create positive opportunities and synergies to all the participants, and not forced co-habitations.



#### A HAMLET-LIKE DILEMMA: INTERNSHIP BY INTERNSHIP, OR CANDIDATE BY CANDIDATE?

From the *M.d.T.* experience, we recommend screening the applications by internship (rather than candidate by candidate). In other words you should look at all the applications filed for each internship position, so the profiles for each one will be more easily comparable. The profile of a recently graduated student interested in five positions will be analyzed five times, once for each internship he/she applied to.

On the other hand, by choosing to analyze each profile individually one after the other while trying to decide whether each one fits the internship positions selected, it will not be possible to make an efficient comparison among each position's candidates.



#### DIGITAL IS BETTER

We recommend using online application forms, since these allow a quick and effective way of managing a lot of information that would otherwise be difficult to manage.

The possibility of breaking down the data permits:

- better verification of the prerequisites of the call for applications (for example, candidates can be arranged by final grade, eliminating those who do not have the minimum grade requirement);
- simultaneous comparison of the candidates' individual characteristics (i.e. their linguistic skills).

vulnerable to disputes.

That is why the *M.d.T.* project chose to:

- establish a series of prerequisites of eligibility to access the project: final grade, graduation date, university of origin, “mandatory” foreign languages, etc. Without one of these requirements, the candidature will be discarded and will not proceed to the next selection phases;
- keep however in consideration the applications of those who had the prerequisites, but whose profile was slightly different from the one required. For example: linguistic skills (the level is selected by the applicant him/herself, and self-evaluation does not follow homogenous criteria), or academic field of a degree (this would allow someone holding a business engineering degree, for instance, to apply to an internship requiring someone with a generic degree in economics/business without specifying other related fields).

## Second phase/1: the evaluation grids

From hereon, we will only be taking into consideration the CVs of candidates with eligible application forms. In order to compare the résumés for each internship position, you will need an evaluation grid for each of the positions.

The weight (values used as multipliers) assigned to each item composing the candidate’s profile (i.e. linguistic skills, academic background, past experiences abroad, etc.) will vary according to the characteristics of each internship position.

For example: let’s assume that a UN agency located in Latin America is looking for an intern with a psychology background for a project countering marginalization phenomena, and, as a consequence of that, the intern might have to work in a “difficult” context. In this case, before looking at the applicants’ CVs, prepare an evaluation grid with different values to assign to each field. In this case, give a higher weight to the elements on the profile that relate to the candidate’s ability to work in challenging environments (i.e. volunteering activities with troubled teenagers in Italy or abroad); the weight assigned to linguistic skills will be important, but lesser than the former.



### DON'T TAKE IT AT FACE VALUE!

The choice of not excluding the candidates with slightly different profiles (but that still respect the prerequisites) from the ones required can be easily explained with an example. Imagine there are two candidates applying to an internship position in the editorial office of a US newspaper, and one of the requirements needed is to hold a humanities degree (possibly in communication studies). Candidate “A” majored in communication studies, claims to be a native English speaker (without explaining how he/she learned the language) and has never worked or undertook an internship in an editorial office.

Candidate “B” holds a degree in letters and philosophy rather than in communication. He/she claims to know English very well (and attaches the Certificate of Proficiency of English) and has been working throughout college with several local newspapers.

Even though the second candidate’s profile isn’t perfectly aligned with the company’s ideal profile, for obvious reasons he/she shouldn’t be excluded *a priori*.

Now let’s instead consider the case of an internship offer for graduates who will be working in a Spanish publishing house. In this case, linguistic skills will weigh more than previous job experiences, and even the important ones (however unrelated to publishing or editing) will be valued less than proficient linguistic skills.

Each evaluation grid will emphasize different elements, and it will be tailored according to the internship’s characteristics.

After having selected and tested these grids, you will be able to pass to the next phase: a comparative evaluation of the candidates.

## Second phase/2: comparing candidatures

With the pre-selection completed (verifying application’s formal prerequisites) and having prepared a specific evaluation grid for each internship position, you can now start an in-depth comparative analysis of the candidatures.

Having provided an application form where the different fields have been carefully selected, it will be easier to examine and compare the applicants’ capabilities. For instance, the answers to the question relating to the linguistic skills’ level may be harmonized through a multiple choice format: the candidate will have to choose between “basic,” “intermediate,” “advanced” and “excellent.” The *M.d.T.* used a guided CV form, in which candidates have to write in fields with specific questions (education, foreign languages, work experiences, etc.) that can then be easily compared.

The comparative evaluation of the applications also includes a careful analysis of all of the elements of the profiles of the candidates who applied to a certain internship. This analysis will have to consider:

- technical skills that would allow the candidate to undertake the internship experience;
- linguistic skills, whose level is not only declared in the self-assessment, but also proven by writing the CV in a foreign language and by mentioning how these skill levels were acquired;
- overall quality of the CV, particularly in terms of academic background, experiences abroad (study or work related) and professional experiences (including internships, volunteering, etc.), languages spoken, and the level of accuracy and completeness of the information provided in the résumé.

Generally speaking, a good candidate’s profile combines the three above mentioned elements. In addition to this, the “perfect” candidate has the right training and educational profile, dynamism



### MASTER DEI TALENTI: DOCUMENTARY-BASED PRE-SELECTIONS

For the *Master dei Talenti Neolaureati* call for applications, the pre-selection is a documentary-based process. There aren’t any interviews with the candidates (which will be carried out by the companies during a later selection phase). This is why the candidates have to be as accurate as possible when filling in the application forms, without neglecting any detail that would better describe and characterize their profile.

and accuracy, a carefully filled out CV, previous experiences abroad, etc.

Academic grades are less relevant, since a minimum academic grade is required to access the project.

Summing up, the pre-selection comprises:

- a phase in which the application's prerequisites are checked;
- the set of an evaluation grid specific to each internship position;
- a comparative analysis of the profiles to determine the 10-12 best candidates' CV.

### The peer evaluation system

The comparative analysis phase requires a human intervention. How is the selection panel composed?

You may assign the examination task to experts, or you may resort to alternative ways: *M.d.T.* project chose a peer evaluation system involving past scholarship holders in the selection panel.

There are several reasons for doing so. One of them is due to increasing number of applicants over the past few years, as the chart on page 42 will illustrate.

During the first editions, the applications were screened by an internal team (of just two people) working for Fondazione CRT. But as the number of applications grew, things changed. So we asked ourselves: who better than past scholarship holders would know the project and have a series of training and professional skills needed to evaluate the candidates for very different internships?

Moreover, past scholarship holders know the project's value and they are motivated to carry out the selection process as well as possible, driven by a sense of responsibility toward the new recruits (they will be glad to contribute to the perpetuation of the project's benefits), and also as a way to "give back" to the entity that made their professional experiences abroad possible. Gathering a group of past scholarship holders will be particularly easy if they are part of a community gravitating around the project, as we will see later.

It is very important to provide a series of guidelines regarding how to carry out the selection process and indications on the specific aspects of the various internships.

For the *M.d.T.* project, the profile evaluation phase lasts a short period of time (a few days). If the selection took too long, it would compromise its homogeneity and it would risk undermining the quality of the project's results: the best candidates could find other job opportunities in the meanwhile.

The selection process, nevertheless, requires careful attention and a lot of hard work. This is why a selection panel should be comprised of several members, each focusing on a certain number of applications, in order to accurately analyze all the profiles.

These evaluators will study each application and assign a value to every CV component, which will be multiplied with a predetermined coefficient associated to each field (this operation being done during the preparation of the evaluation grid) to create a ranking.

The following table provides an example of this calculation (the table refers to an internship undertaken in a British investment bank).

	Solid quantitative analytical skills (particularly if applied to analysis of capital and stock markets)	Past work experience in the business sector; Ability to cope with stress/work pressure	Overall evaluation of previous experiences abroad	Overall evaluation of linguistic skills	Overall quality of the CV	Total score
CANDIDATE 1	1	2	2,5	3	1,5	297,5
CANDIDATE 2	2	3	3,5	4	4	517,5
CANDIDATE 3	0	2	2	2	1	210

Every profile is assigned a score from 1 to 5 (including decimal points) for each field in the evaluation grid. Each score is then multiplied by a predetermined coefficient (in this example, 40 for the field "Solid quantitative analytical skills...", 35 for "past work experiences," 25 for "experiences abroad," etc.). The value assigned to the predetermined coefficient is based on how much that field is worth to the related internship.

Through this process it is possible to assign a final score for each candidate ranking them.

Finally, it is a good idea to use a traceability system for the evaluation process to retain a complete picture of the criteria used, the candidate's scores and evaluations. In this way it will be possible to understand the reasons for selecting or rejecting every application, even long after completing the selections.



#### AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO ASSESS PROFILES

The combination of evaluation grids (tailored to each internship) and scores (assigned to each facet of the candidate's profile) is a very effective way to select the best candidates. Other kinds of assessments (for example, a classification based on non-numerical marks or comments on each CV component) would make it more difficult to identify the 10-15 best profiles, especially when 120-130 people apply to the same internship: among them there could be 50 or 60 great CVs.

### Completing the selections

Once the best CVs are sent to the partner companies/organizations for their internship positions offered, the final selection stage will begin to find the winning candidates. Every company will select its interns according to its own internal procedures. Nevertheless, the gentleman's agreement should establish some basic ground rules for the company:

- the timeframe: the partner organization should select the winner(s) by a certain deadline, so that the candidates don't have to wait forever. *M.d.T.* left the deadline up to the company, as long as it was within a month and a half from when the company received the candidatures;
- the place: the candidates should not have to incur in travel expenses (since many of the

companies are located abroad). These company should either cover the costs, or opt to send an interviewer to meet the candidates in person, or conduct a phone interview. Once the winners are selected, two related questions rise: what if that candidate has already been selected for another internship? And what if the intern doesn't intend to start the internship? To address these issues, some simple procedures should be set up to, on the one hand, facilitate the promoting entity (for the *M.d.T.* project, Fondazione CRT) monitoring the situation, and, on the other hand, to ensure the candidates' seriousness.

Once the intern is officially selected:

- the winner has to be informed. In the case of *M.d.T.*, the promoting entity (Fondazione CRT) communicates the news, rather than the partner company. In this way, it is possible to coordinate more efficiently, without overlaps in the order of choices in case two organizations selected the same candidate;
- the winner will have to send within a few days (2 or 3) an official acceptance of the internship. If the candidate has also concurrently been selected for one or more internships, or if he/she is still waiting to hear from other companies, this time constraint will prevent excessively long waits, and the internships rejected can be quickly redirected to the second best in the ranking.

The internship offer can be officially accepted by signing an acceptance document containing some basic rules. For example, a clause prohibiting an interruption of the internship unless having serious and grounded motivations, or in case of another job offer. The *M.d.T.* chose to not allow internship interruptions for academic purposes (penalty the restitution of the entire scholarship received until then) because the *M.d.T.* experience

should be an alternative to continuing studying, and the graduate should have chosen whether or not to undertake this experience before starting the internship.

The interruption of an internship (without serious grounds) would put the promoting entity in a difficult situation in the project partner's regards, and should be discouraged as much as possible. An ungrounded interruption is usually an unpleasant event, and it could sometimes undermine the partnerships.

The promoting partner's role doesn't end when the interns are selected. On the contrary, this event marks the beginning of an accurate and constant monitoring aimed at verifying the actual beginning of the activities, how they are progressing, whether the position matches what was described in the application form (internship profile) and its quality, and so on.



#### SELECTION METHODS AND TIMEFRAME

It's practically impossible to force all the companies to finish their selections simultaneously. Some candidates will therefore have to solve a dilemma: accept a position offer or reject it and wait for a possible offer from a more interesting organization? In light of this, it is better not to allow candidates to express their preferences for one or another internship when presenting their candidatures.

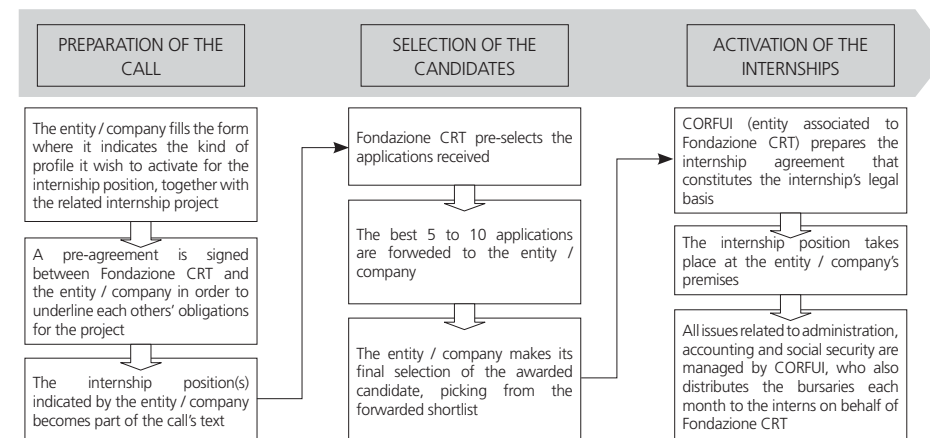


FIGURE 1 – The steps of the process: the phases of the *M.d.T.* project (from the preparation of the call for applications to the activation of the internships) as illustrated in the information material on the 2010 call for applications for new companies and organizations.

#### IN CONCLUSION:

- The selection has to be shared: structure the process in two phases, one involving the promoting entity and the other involving every partner company/organization.
- Carefully evaluate the ineligibilities for the criteria necessary for the candidature: but be flexible regarding those characteristics (i.e. degree type) that cannot provide a sufficiently exhaustive picture of the candidate's actual skills (work experiences, volunteering, which could supplement a less pertinent degree).
- Compare the candidates' profiles, evaluating the characteristics of all those applying for each internship: to do so, use an evaluation grid, to get numerical values and a ranking of the candidates.
- Find the 10-12 best candidatures for each internship.
- Peer evaluation: involving a team of former scholarship holders (with their varied knowledge, fields and skills) is an effective way to ensure a quick and accurate selection process.
- Let the partner organizations proceed in their own intern selections, limiting however their time to do so and asking that candidates not to bear travel expenses.
- It's useful to ask companies to rank their top selections, allowing the winners 2-3 days to accept the internship offer. In doing so, in case the first ranked isn't available, the second best can be contacted. Otherwise, the time to finalize many internship positions could become unmanageable.
- Have the winners sign an acceptance document binding them to participate in the project with responsibility and coherently: improper behavior or unjustified interruptions of the internship could undermine the partnership with the company.



## 7. Master dei Talenti: communication strategies

### Why communicate?

An effective communication strategy is essential to ensure a wide diffusion of the project. But why should the project and the call for applications be adequately advertised?

First of all, to allow the recently graduated students to learn about the initiative and its opportunities in time. Moreover, the succession of effective communication strategies can embed the idea of the project in the minds of the students.

The ambitious objective of the *Master dei Talenti Neolaureati* (*M.d.T.*) is to create an expectation in the students about the project from their very first years of university. The project should become as popular as other initiatives, like the Erasmus Project. It is an achievable goal, especially considering the limited area targeted by the Fondazione CRT (Piedmont and Valle d'Aosta), but it takes time, money and a lot of hard work.



#### WHAT TARGET?

The targets of the communication strategies are the possible participants, but who are they? And how to assess their interest?

They are those who have the prerequisites to apply to the project, and their actual interest can be assessed bases on the number of candidatures received for every call for application.

With a coherent and prolonged communication strategy, it is possible to see a constant growth throughout the years of those who (having the prerequisites) applied to the project.

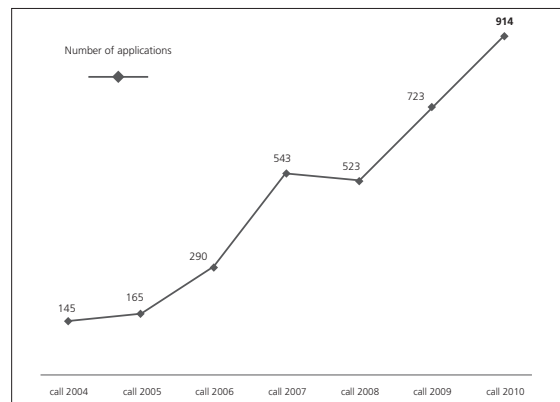


FIGURE 2 – Number of applications broken down by call year.

The strategy will be carried out to communicate the issuing of the call for applications, and it will have a double focus range: a general one (a.k.a. macro-campaign) to embed the project in the collective consciousness, and a more targeted one (a.k.a. micro-campaign) to inform those who could be interested in the project.

When should the campaign preparation start? Every year, *M.d.T.* publishes its call for applications in February, but the planning phase for the campaign begins a few months beforehand, usually in October.

### Image and claim

A good general strategy should determine a specific and recognizable image and claim identifying and characterizing the project. The *M.d.T.* project chose to maintain these elements from one call for applications to another, presenting them consistently throughout the years. Some key elements were selected and used to characterize each call, while nevertheless permitting some theme variations every year.

Who can take care of this strategy? The creation of the campaigns is usually assigned to experts; however, the *M.d.T.* project, after having resorted to specialists for some years, decided to try something different.

Assigning the creation of campaigns to advertising agencies (a choice taken in the project's first years) has provided interesting results, but they were, however, unable to reach the desired objectives in terms of the creative message's coherence with the spirit of the *Master dei Talenti*.

So we asked ourselves: who better than those who have already participated in the initiative would be able to understand and express the essence of the project? We therefore decided to involve past scholarship holders in the process to create an advertisement campaign through a sort of "idea competition" for these former interns. This has produced excellent results, also thanks to the fact that there were many computer graphics experts among them (through academic training or professional/internship experience).

Through a call for proposals inviting past scholarship holders to participate the campaign, four remarkable proposals were submitted by four work groups (people interested in the call organized themselves in specialized teams covering an advertisement agency's functions, i.e. copywriter, art director, and so on).

Once the winning proposal is selected, the graphic style and claim are reintegrated in several ways and presented on all the material prepared for the advertising campaign.

This method is not a mandatory path; it is the result, rather, of a successful experiment that strengthened the former interns' sense of belonging to a community that continues to involve them even after the internship ends.

### The macro-campaign

The macro-campaign is the broader communication campaign,



FIGURE 3 – Posters for the 2010 edition of the *Master dei Talenti Neolaureati* call for applications. As you may note the claim mixed English and Italian on purpose to create a funny effect.

aimed at reaching both the potential candidates and at embedding the idea, the image and the name of the project in the general public's consciousness.

The material prepared for the *Master dei Talenti*'s macro-campaign usually comprised a series of advertisement posters and flyers with a simple and straightforward message, and a brochure illustrating the project (with numbers, results and a brief overview of some of the most significant experiences of partner companies and past grant beneficiaries).

The posters are intended as street advertisement, while the flyers can be displayed in street shops' windows. There are also several other distribution channels as well: from ads in newspapers and magazines, to ads inside and on the exterior of public transportation vehicles, to various kinds of postcards and other pamphlets.

Finally, *M.d.T.* also organizes a press conference to announce the opening of the call for applications. Partner organizations and former interns are invited to participate and to share their past experiences.

### The micro-campaign

The micro-campaign is not a minor component of the communication strategy, it is just less visible to the general public (but not less important). It includes all the communication activities specifically targeted in a capillary way to those who may benefit from the project (i.e. recent graduates with the necessary prerequisites to apply: final grade and date of graduation, university of origin, age at graduation, and so on).

This kind of campaign is fundamental for the *M.d.T.* project: it is crucial that any potential candidate be informed about the existence of this initiative, when the call is issued and what the application deadlines are. Not everyone will apply, but at least it will not be because they lacked information on the opportunity offered!

To this end, every year the Fondazione CRT works closely with universities in Piedmont and Valle d'Aosta. This collaboration results in personalized letters sent to each recent graduate who is eli-

gible to apply. Despite the digital times we live in, the choice of a traditional letter (rather than an electronic version of it) is still an efficient one to communicate with the addressees, and it allows the promoting partner to include in the packet the project's information material. Moreover, the letter contains both the signature of the university's rector and of the Fondazione CRT's president: a clear (and cost-effective) way to confer authoritativeness and prestige to the initiative thanks to the collaboration with each university. This letter can also be sent to the professors, so they may inform and guide their students.

In this way there is the certainty of reaching 100% of the potential candidates.

E-mails, of course, are not neglected: a few days before the call for applications is issued, these recent graduates are also contacted via e-mail with all the information concerning the initiative. The *Master dei Talenti* chose to send these messages through the Almalaurea (an inter-universities consortium gathering 60 Italian universities) channel, or by university offices that can offer similar information services (such as career offices, which provide of other ways and occasions to spread the project's news and information through their websites, newsletters, mailing lists, etc.).

Moreover, local job agencies frequently offer support services helping young people find interesting internship possibilities in the area; even the universities' alumni associations can be a useful way to spread the project. This list of alternatives could go on and on, but the intent is clear: use all the communication channels possible to reach the students and recent graduates who may be interested in participating in the project.

It is also a good idea to meet the potential candidates in the very first days of the call for applications, for example dedicating a presentation specifically addressed to those with the necessary prerequisites who may be interested in applying. Universities are perfectly suited (and spacious) environments to host such events. In this way the potential candidates may ask questions and gain a good understanding of how the project works and how to apply.

For the *Master dei Talenti*, capillary communication activities continue throughout the entire call for applications period, by having a specific email address where those who are about to apply may ask questions, and a webpage devoted to frequently asked questions (FAQs). These are constantly updated and improved according to the type of inquiries received: they should allow



#### TARGETED OR CONTINUOUS CAMPAIGN?

*M.d.T.* chose an in-between campaign typology.

The macro-campaign (the posters and advertisements) for the general public is targeted and carried out during the month preceding the opening of the call for applications.

The direct marketing micro-campaign intended for the graduates takes place during the months before. The letters inviting the recent graduates with the right qualifications to participate to the project has both an immediate and a long-term effect. Undergraduates intending to continue their studies who will not apply to that edition of the project, will nevertheless already be aware of the initiative before having finished their graduate degrees.

Moreover, it is possible to add a series of periodic communications to inform recipients about the project's news and updates, serving as a reminder for those students who may intend to participate after they get their master's degree.



#### PUT A FACE ON IT!

Project presentations carried out in person in the universities once the call for applications is available are an excellent way to establish a direct contact with potential candidates.

In this occasion, it will be possible to better explain the project's objectives, how the application process works, what are the best ways to apply, the selection criteria adopted, etc.

Candidates always appreciate this type of meetings, since it gives them a chance to put a face to the project and it represents a precious opportunity to ask questions directly to who runs the initiative.





#### OUR CLIENTS ARE OUR BEST ADVERTISEMENT!

One of the things that will help you spreading the initiative as much as possible is the level of satisfaction of the former scholarship holders and the resulting project promotion.

Word of mouth and positive reviews will start spreading in the universities and online, thereby raising awareness and promoting the project. This sort of online publicity could even produce spontaneously-generated groups of scholarship holders (current, past and potential ones too) on the main social networks.

users to solve any doubt, so that they can all be able to apply in the best way possible. A very detailed list of FAQs (*M.d.T.* has over 50 FAQs in its webpage) explaining the process in a clear and unambiguous way, can also drastically reduce the time spent answering all the common questions one by one; it will also represent an investment for the future, since the vast majority of these answers can be used again for later editions.

Such contact with potential applicants is also useful in correcting

possible defects in how the call for application is set up and to improve the communication strategies. Lastly, this relentless candidate-assistance work also represents an important premise to the constant assistance that will be offered to the interns selected.

#### IN CONCLUSION:

- An effective communication strategy is essential to allow the potentially interested (and qualified) graduates to be informed on the opportunities offered and to embed the idea of the project in the minds of the students and those involved in the process.
- Prepare a clear and recognizable image and claim representing and characterizing the project (for *M.d.T.*, the graphic style and claim were the product of a competition among past scholarship beneficiaries).
- Use various channels to spread the initiative: from advertisements on newspapers and magazines, to ads inside and on the outside of public transportation vehicles, to postcards, flyers and various pamphlets, and so on.
- Organize a press conference presenting the idea (especially when launching the call for applications).
- To reach potential candidates in a capillary and targeted fashion, send a personalized message to all those fulfilling the prerequisites necessary to apply; also consider working with local entities offering assistance to young people looking for internship and job opportunities in the region.
- Prepare a series of encounters and presentations (ideally in the universities) with the potential candidates.
- Prepare an exhaustive list of FAQs to help candidates fill out their applications as best as possible, and to avoid having to answer to similar questions several times.

## 8. Managing the internships: activation, assistance, *follow-up*

### Prior to departure

Once the candidates selected have officially accepted the internship offer, it would be wise to prepare a meeting with the new scholarship recipients to explain the project's details, their rights and duties, and to illustrate the kind of assistance available.

Interns about to leave will have to fulfill some bureaucratic steps prior to their departure; they will have to:

- meet the technical partner in charge of paying the scholarships (for the *M.d.T.* grants, that role is played by Corfui);
- sign the internship convention/agreement (depending on the case at hand, the agreement will fall under Italy's and/or the foreign country's laws);
- have insurance coverage and, if necessary, obtain the required visas.

The prospective interns should not book a flight before being sure they will be able to complete all these tasks.

Finally, the interns should be aware of the fact that their first monthly installment will happen at the end of the first month of internship. They will have to pay themselves all expenses incurred during that first month, which will then be reimbursed by the first installment. Alternatively, they could ask for an advance before leaving (but, in case they were to interrupt the internship later on, this advanced amount will also have to be returned).

### Visas

Some of the internships could take place in countries requiring a visa. In these cases, all the steps necessary to activate the internship should be planned from the very moment when the agreement is being prepared. Otherwise, there is the risk that the internship will not be activated (which could turn out to be a particularly thorny issue if the intern has already been selected and he/she has already accepted the scholarships, perhaps interrupting another preexisting work experience or turning down other offers).

The first thing to do is to make sure that the visa type is the right one: for example, some countries do not allow people with a tourist visa to turn it into a worker visa once they have arrived in that country. Therefore, the company should inform the intern beforehand so that he/she will immediately ask for the right type of visa.

The timeframe to obtain such specific permits can be rather prolonged in some countries. For example it wouldn't be realistic for an internship to be undertaken in United States or in China to set a start date for the internship activities just a few days after the interns' selection.

In order to have all the necessary information, the company should be asked to specify in the agreement:

- the type of visa necessary to enter the country (or countries) where the internship will take place;
- a general timeframe for how long it would take to obtain it;
- the list of documents necessary to get the visa;
- the company's commitment to provide the intern all the necessary documents.

In any case, it is up to the scholarship holders to request and obtain the visas. Sometimes, however, acquiring a visa can be an expensive process: the intern could then ask the hosting partner to cover it (fully or partially), or consider the cost as something that will be reimbursed by the scholarship installment received at the end of that first month. Grant recipients should be aware of this from the very beginning.

### Insurance coverage

During the stay abroad it would be best for the interns to be insured (covering medical assistance, work-related injuries and liability insurance). Host companies/organizations will have to provide some form of coverage (in compliance with their national laws) to the candidates during their internships. Additional coverage, however, might be needed (particularly for aspects related to health services).

There are many alternatives available:

- provide the same insurance to all grant recipients. This option, however, would make it more difficult to appropriately insure all candidates in all destinations, as medical costs may be much higher in some countries than others (i.e. United States);
- solicit the scholarship beneficiary to activate an *ad hoc* insurance policy, whose cost can be covered by the scholarship amount (which would be increased to include this expense).

### Assistance and monitoring

Once all the bureaucratic requirements have been completed, the intern can leave and start the internship. Your role, however, isn't over: it's now time to start the phase of personal assistance to the interns. In other words, you should become the point of reference for the grant beneficiaries from the start of the internship throughout their professional experience abroad. In case issues arise (for example, the company doesn't provide those facilitations and services that had been previously and officially declared, or the position turns out to be different from what had been described in the internship profile, and so on), you may provide instructions for the interns to follow or, if necessary, discuss the matter with the host company.

Sometimes it could be necessary to intervene on matters not related to the company's behavior, but to the intern's (illnesses and injuries, behavioral problems, lack of respect toward rules and regulations, missing attendance sheet, etc.). In case of serious shortcomings, the intern's scholarship could even be suspended.



#### THE ATTENDANCE SHEET

Throughout the entire internship, the scholarship's installments will be allotted upon receiving a monthly statement verifying the intern's activities (i.e. a document signed by the company tutor certifying the intern's daily attendance).

Other serious circumstances should also present themselves, such as the company's bankruptcy, or if the office where an intern is working is suddenly closed, the change or absence of a tutor, and so on. In these cases, the intern should nevertheless be granted the possibility of fulfilling a valuable experience, by intervening: usually by transferring

the intern to another host company or, if necessary, to another country.

A project like the *M.d.T.* could, for instance, ask another partner organization to activate an internship for that scholarship holder, as long as the position is compatible with the intern's profile. It could also ask the scholarship recipient to look for another internship position with a different host company. Or it could consult past grant beneficiaries who have found jobs abroad, who may have precious advice on the intern's relocation.

### The follow-up

The promoting entity's role continues even after the end of the internships, carrying out monitoring activities:

- a first survey, administered immediately after the internship end, to assess whether the experience was a constructive, if the scholarship grant was sufficient, if the host company offered the intern a job (even temporary). This follow-up's feedback could be instrumental in preparing the next edition of the project and the call for applications;
- a second survey, administered later on (1, 3 and 5 years after the internship), to appraise the effects of that experience abroad on the graduate's career. This questionnaire could assess: occupation, type of contract, income, a personal and professional evaluation of the experience, and so on. This will allow to determine the internship's effects in the long run:



#### DO INTERNS RETURN TO ITALY?

Contrary to what one might think, many graduates tend to go back to Italy.

The publication "Master dei Talenti Neolaureati: Survey of Past Grant Beneficiaries" results from a study developed in 2009 on the winners of the first five calls for applications (from 2004 to 2008). Among its findings, one is related to the return rate: 70,7% (87 out of the 123 who answered the survey) returned to Italy, while the remaining 29.3% (the other 36 respondents) were still abroad in 2009. Among the latter sample, 11 people were working (or studying) in a country different from the one where they had carried out the internship; while most of them (25 people, or 70% of those abroad) were still in that foreign country, having received job offers after finishing their internships there.

some former interns will be able to find immediately appealing jobs, but it would be more interesting to spot a clear career acceleration, after five or more years, for past grant beneficiaries.

Finally, keeping in touch with these former interns (through surveys by other means), the entire program will benefit, as emphasized above in the description of the peer evaluation and the communication strategies system. The chapter on “The *Master dei Talenti* community” will discuss this aspect further.

#### IN CONCLUSION:

- It could be useful to meet the interns selected prior to their departure.
- Interns should complete some bureaucratic procedures before leaving, as: signing the internship agreement, having an insurance policy and obtaining the right type of visa.
- Host organizations should provide information on the type of visa needed to stay and work in the country where the internship is located.
- Expenses incurred in acquiring the visa could be covered (partially or completely) by the company or by the intern through the scholarship granted.
- The intern should have an insurance policy covering medical expenses, liability, and work-related accidents. You may choose either to assign the same policy for every intern, or to let them have their own and possibly co-pay the expenses.
- After leaving, the intern will have to receive assistance and monitoring, particularly if issues arise. In the worst cases, evaluate the possibility of relocating the intern to another organization and/or country.
- Prepare follow up activities to assess former scholarship holders’ situation after the internship ends (also to get feedback to improve the next edition), as well as years later to measure the effects of the experience abroad on the careers of the graduates who participated in the project.

## 9. The *Master dei Talenti* community

### Building a community

The *Master dei Talenti* (*M.d.T.*) project is more than just a way to distribute scholarship-funded internships to recent graduates. It is a richer and more complex experience, one that “gives,” but also that “gains” from the past scholarship beneficiaries’ contributions (even non material) and their positive experiences.

Past grant beneficiaries are invited to participate to the *M.d.T.* community, with newly selected scholarship winners as well as the ones from past editions.

Appealing to their sense of duty is not enough to get an effective response: they should perceive this is a project that continues to work for them and which continues to exist thanks to their contribution.

The community should have agile and efficient communication tools, but it should also be built and consolidated with the former interns, also through meetings, gatherings and training for the new ones. In other words: a cohesive community can only be kept together when its members are face to face, sharing common experiences and issues, in direct contact with those planning and running the project. The community should therefore have “a face” (or, rather, a multiplicity of faces).

The experience consolidated by *M.d.T.* throughout the years has taught us to:

- Personally meet the new scholarship recipients prior to their departure to establish a first contact and to give them an overall idea of how the project works and what will be expected from them. Moreover, these new interns will have a chance to meet each other, as well as past grant beneficiaries willing to share their experience;
- invite the new interns to participate to an online forum throughout their experience, where they can describe how the internship is going, communicate with other project participants throughout the world, and ask advice to past grant beneficiaries and to those running the project;
- after the internships end, organize some events (seminars, training courses, etc.) for all the past grant recipients;
- when possible, forward to the community job offers reserved for them. Once the project has gained a good reputation, some companies might contact the promoting partner looking for qualified human resources.



#### PEER EVALUATION: RESTITUTION AND GATHERING IN ONE

Every year, the work of peer evaluation is a significant moment of “restitution” as well as an opportunity to consolidate a sense of belonging to the *M.d.T.* community. The members of the selection panel will share a sense how important that role is to the new candidates.

### The past *Master dei Talenti* grant beneficiaries

We have stressed the benefits of involving past grant beneficiaries in the project. Even though it requires a certain (and constant) endeavor to set up and consolidate the community, your efforts will be paid back.

The activities carried out by past scholarship beneficiaries, perceived as a sort of “restitution” to the project, include:

- tutoring new scholarship winners;
- assessing their own internship experience, also in view of the preparation of the next edition’s call for applications;
- carrying out the role as “ambassadors” of the project in new professional environments (national and international), aimed to create an increasingly varied and qualifying portfolio of internship positions offered;
- contributing to the peer evaluation process;
- participating in the organization of events.

#### IN CONCLUSION:

- Former scholarship holders should have the perception that the project continues working for them even after the internship, and that it continues to exist also thanks to their contribution.
- The community should have agile and efficient communication tools, but it should be built and consolidated on the basis of moments of aggregation and training, dedicated to former scholarship holders.
- Former scholarship holders can bring a valuable contribution to the phases of tutoring new scholarship holders, peer evaluation, in their role as “ambassadors” in new companies (in Italy and abroad), to ultimately create an increasingly varied and qualifying portfolio of internship offers.

## 10. Surveying the winners – an overview

### The survey

In June 2009, over five years after the first edition of the *Master dei Talenti Neolaureati*, Fondazione CRT promoted a survey on the winners of the 2004-2008 editions.

We interviewed all the winners of the *M.d.T.* (except for the 2009 interns, who had just begun their internships just a few months before).

In total, during those first five editions, 191 internships were activated. 189 of those past grant beneficiaries participated in the survey (the other two could not be reached), with a 98.95% participation rate. The study was subsequently published in 2010; the following is an overview of its results.

### Description of the sample

Of the 189 who answered the survey, 114 are women (60.3%) and 75 are men (39.7%).

Over half of the interviewees (51.3%) had a Master’s Degree when they applied to the *M.d.T.* project, 30.7% had *vecchio ordinamento* degrees (Master’s Degrees obtained before the 1999 university reform), and 17.9% had *nuovo ordinamento* Bachelor’s Degrees.

As for their types of degrees (academic fields), 19.1% were in engineering and another 19.1% in political sciences, 17.9% in economics/statistics, 10.6% in humanities and 9.5% in sciences; 8.9% in modern languages, 5.3% law, 4.2% in architecture, 3.2% in psychology, 1.1% in agriculture and 1.1% in geobiology.

As for the destination countries, many of the internships took place in Belgium (16.9%) and France (14.8%), followed by the United Kingdom (11.1%), Switzerland (8.9%), the United States (7.9%) and China (7.4%).

The project also managed to activate internships in a wide range of countries: from Russia to Japan, from Angola to Chile, from Finland to Burkina Faso.

In terms of duration, 68.8% carried out 9 to 12 months long internships, 11.1% had 6 to 9 months, while 20.1% of them worked up to 6 months.

Almost a third of them worked in a big company (usually multinational corporations), 25.4% in an international organization, 9.5% in a SME and 5.8% in a research institute. The remaining 9.5% carried out its internship with unions, associations, or other type of entities.

### Employment rate

The past grant beneficiaries’ employment rate was measured 2, 3, and 4 years after their internship, so it refers to the 2007, 2006, and 2005 editions of the *M.d.T.* project; the 2008 participants could not be considered at the time the survey was being carried out, because most of them were still finishing their internships. Therefore the sample is reduced to 123 people.

From the survey, it appears that 84.6% of past grant beneficiaries is employed. Across the years, the employment rates were: 79.4% from the 2007 edition, 87.2% from 2006, and 95.2% in 2005.

In terms of academic background, the higher employment rates were in languages (100%), followed by engineering (96.2%), humanities (90.0%), economics (84.0%) and law (83.3%), and finally sciences (72.7%) and political science (70.8%).

As for kind of organization where the *M.d.T.* internships were carried out, the best performances were in large companies (90%), followed by international organizations (87.0%), and SME (85.7%).

Many scholarship beneficiaries received a job offer where they had worked as interns through the *Master dei Talenti*: 49.7% (92 people out of the 185 interviewees). Among them, those from legal studies received more offers (6 out of 10), followed by humanistic studies (11 out of 20) and political and economic studies (roughly 54 per cent). Only one architect out of the 8 who participated received an offer to continue working for the internship partner company.

In terms of kinds of contract, 45.2% of the past grant recipients already have an open-ended contract. Looking more closely, 32% of the winners of the 2007 edition, 50% of the 2006 edition and 70% of the two 2005 editions.

Among the interviewees, 70.7% has returned to Italy, and many of those who stayed abroad expressed an interest in going back to Italy.

As for their remuneration, the past *M.d.T.* scholarship beneficiaries' average net monthly wage was 1,731 euros for the 2007 edition, 1,629 euros for the 2006 one, and 2,031 for the ones in 2005.

The data indicated a difference in retributions between those who came back to Italy and those who chose to stay abroad:

- past grant beneficiaries now working in Italy earn on average 1,246 euros (the 2007 edition's participants), 1,464 euros (2006's participants), and 1,750 euros a month (2005's participants);
- those now working abroad earn higher incomes: participants from the 2007 edition earn on average 2,347 euros a month, 2,396 euros for those from the 2006 edition, and 2,688 euros for the ones from the 2005 editions.

The best performances were registered by graduates in the fields of economics and engineering, followed by legal and political studies.

An important aspect is the time it takes former *M.d.T.* grant beneficiaries to find a job after their internship experience. Of the 104 past grant recipients who are currently employed, 63 of them (or 60.5%) found a job immediately after their internships; this number is certainly influenced by the fact that many former interns received an offer directly from the company they had been working for. As for the others, 21 people (or 20.2%) took 1 to 3 months to find another job, 11 people (or 10.6%) took 4 to 6 months, and 9 people (8.6%) took more than 6 months: many of these, in fact, started studying again to obtain a Master's degree and - only after having obtained it - they started looking for employment.

### The satisfaction

Interviewees were also asked questions about how satisfied they were about the experience in

order to assess whether and how much the internship program contributed to their careers and if it "changed their life" (by orienting professional and other life choices).

The results were definitely satisfactory: the interviewees gave the project a 9 out of 10 for its overall importance, and 8/10 for how significant it was on their career. The *M.d.T.* experience resulted to be a significant one to the respondents' careers, particularly for those coming from economic, legal, linguistic and engineering fields; while participants with backgrounds in psychology and architecture were less sure about the fact that the *Master dei Talenti* had increased their chances in the employment market.

Nevertheless, everyone acknowledged that the *M.d.T.* experience had had a significant impact on their lives, influencing choices and opening new perspectives.

### Attempting a comparison

Despite the number of past *M.d.T.* grant beneficiaries is relatively small, particularly for the first editions (2005 and 2006), a comparison was made with the data provided by the Almalaurea, which annually produces the report "Indagine sulla Condizione occupazionale dei Laureati" (a survey on graduates' employment situation, available at [www.almalaurea.it](http://www.almalaurea.it)).

Furthermore, the *M.d.T.* survey of past grant beneficiaries was carried out at a different time than Almalaurea's survey. The difference of almost a year between these two studies is reflected in various key elements, such as employment rates and remuneration levels. Almalaurea used data from its 2008 survey, referred to graduates (holding a degree prior to the reform, or *vecchio ordinamento*) 1, 3, and 5 years after they had graduated.

This is why the comparison, rather having a statistical value, is more useful to provide a general idea.

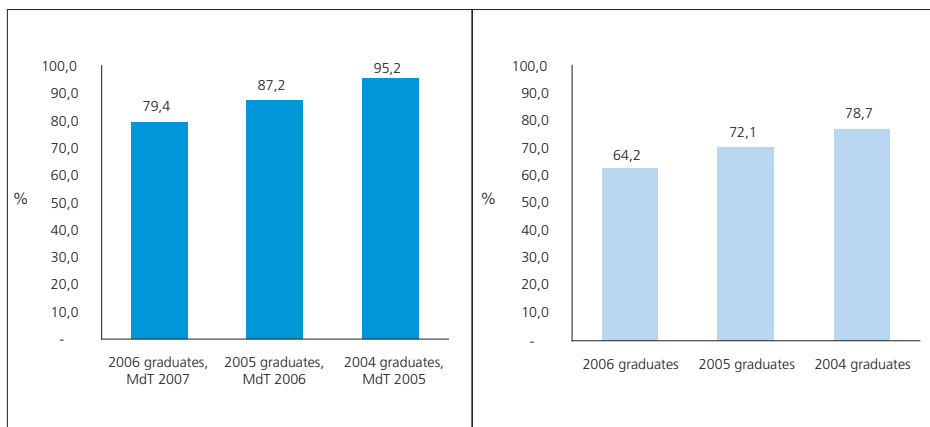


FIGURE 4 – Comparing employment rates for former Master dei Talenti grant recipients (on the left, in blue) and Italian recent graduates (on the right, in light blue)

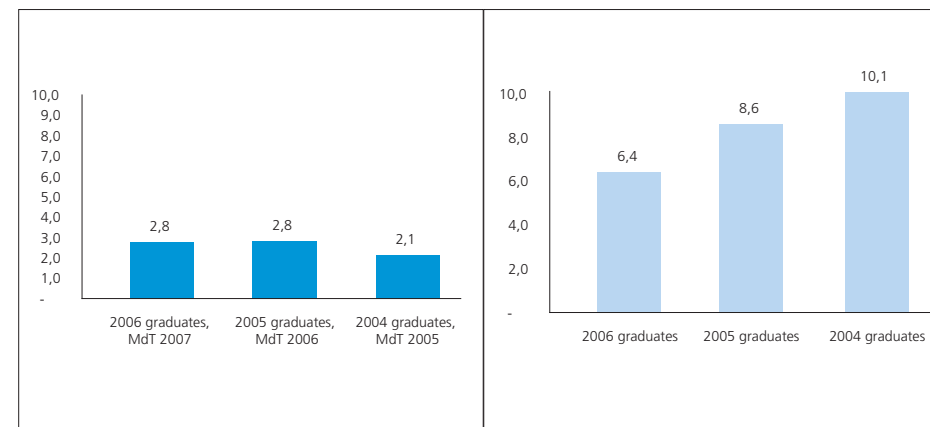


FIGURE 6 – Comparing months elapsed between the end of the M.d.T. internship and employment (on the left, in blue, Master dei Talenti grant recipients) and months elapsed between graduation and employment (on the right, in light blue, Italian recent graduates).

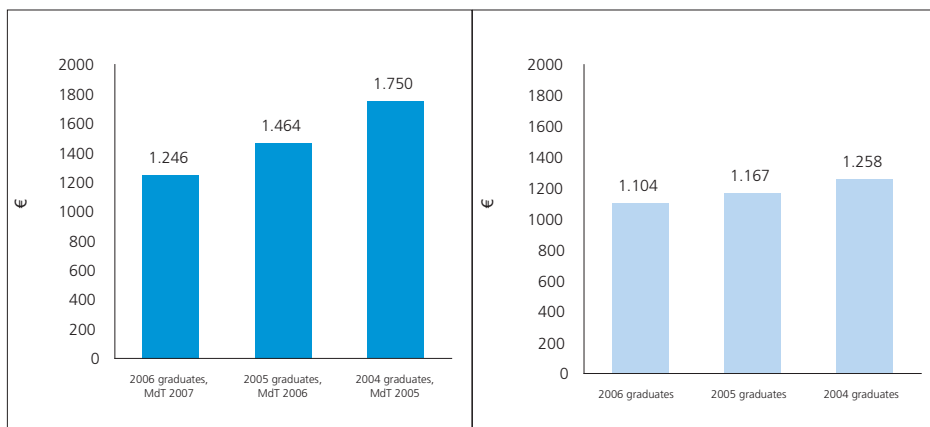


FIGURE 5 – Comparing net monthly remuneration levels for former Master dei Talenti grant recipients (on the left, in blue) and Italian recent graduates (on the right, in light blue)

## Final considerations

Generally speaking, the project's objective of creating a "career accelerator" has been achieved. As a matter of fact, a satisfactory remuneration level can offer not only economic gratification, but it can also be an indicator of a greater professionalism and responsibility. Salary levels also reward those who came back to Italy, who register good performances (albeit not as high as those colleagues who chose to remain abroad) particularly a few years after the *M.d.T.* experience. In the long run, however, most of the participants tend to return to Italy, even after having prolonged their time abroad a few years.

Among the most common signs of appreciation for the *Master dei Talenti* registered during the survey, there is the common belief among the past grant recipients that this program contributed to accessing new work opportunities that would have otherwise been hard to reach. This is particularly true for international organizations (usually more difficult for recently graduated students to access) and multinational corporations. These realities, which generally attract a lot of recent graduates from every country, are highly competitive and someone coming from a university in Piedmont (even if endowed with an excellent academic background) could have a very hard time trying to access even just an internship position there.

Moreover, there is also the significant fact that *M.d.T.* offers everyone the possibility of spending a year abroad, independently of his or her economic background. This is why the scholarship amounts disbursed are relatively high.

And last, but not least, after their internship experience, past grant beneficiaries seem to find a job more quickly.

The levels of satisfaction concerning the importance attributed to the *M.d.T.* experience are registered throughout the various academic fields of origin. What is striking, is that this satisfaction increases as the years go by, after having had the chance to use the skills acquired during the *Master dei Talenti* to find a satisfying job.

## Notes

[illegible]

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Torino

Via XX Settembre 31 - 10121 Torino

[www.fondazioneCRT.it](http://www.fondazioneCRT.it)

[info@fondazioneCRT.it](mailto:info@fondazioneCRT.it)