

## Start of EMSP internship programme for young professionals with multiple sclerosis (MS):

### “Not charity, but real opportunities”

- Paid positions from six to twelve months in corporations
- No risk from condition disclosure
- Coaching, assistance and progress reporting

The **European Multiple Sclerosis Platform (EMSP)** has this month officially started its “**Believe and Achieve**” programme making paid internships with important businesses available to young people with MS across Europe.

*“We’ve always said that people with MS are not asking for charity, but for opportunities”, says Project Coordinator Emma Rogan.*

*“EMSP and our corporate partners are now offering those opportunities. In a first phase, we’ve made available 15 positions within national branches of a major international pharmaceutical company, **Novartis**, and a global biotechnology company, **Biogen Idec**. The duration varies between six and twelve months.”*

The first two “**Believe and Achieve**” internships have already started in mid-January, with **EMSP**’s corporate partner **Novartis**.

**Anna Zaghi** is working with the Customer Marketing Head in the Neuroscience Department, at the company’s headquarters near Milano, Italy.

*“This internship means a lot to me because I know that I will work in a setting in which I won’t be afraid to disclose my disease: my employers are aware of my condition and they know that once a month I need to go to the hospital for treatment, and it’s up to me whether to disclose the disease to my colleagues”, said Anna.*

*“Most importantly, this is my first step into the labour market, a chance to show what I can really do in the workplace. I expect to improve my skills and competences in a field which is new for me. I am looking forward to learning a lot about the corporate sector, in particular the position of the company in relation with other stakeholders, such as patient organisations and institutions, within the framework of customer care policies.*

*I’ll be mainly involved in projects about patients’ compliance to a specific treatment. I am fully committed and I’ll do my best to contribute to improving the quality of life of people with MS, from my position in the company.”*

**Ionna Christodoulidou** is working in Project Management within the Neuroscience Business Department at the company's offices in Athens, Greece.

*"This placement allows me to become a productive member of the society by showing that my disease is not an obstacle to what I am capable of doing. In addition, this internship is directly associated to my recent studies", said Ionna.*

*The first week was marvelous. Even though I am in a new environment, I didn't feel for a minute stressed or anxious. All my colleagues have been very helpful and friendly. But the fact that influenced me most positively is that everyone is treating me as an equal member though they know my condition.*

*My expectation about the months ahead is to successfully fulfill my assignment and I hope that the friendly environment will be preserved throughout my internship."*

Corporate partner **Biogen Idec** is also nearing completion of interviews to bring the first interns on board in the near future.

Project Coordinator Emma Rogan calls out to all interested companies and young people to join and share the journey of "**Believe and Achieve**".

*"We are seeking more businesses who believe in putting ability before disability. And, of course, we are kindly inviting applications from young people with MS who want to start their careers in inclusive work environments!"*

**"Believe and Achieve"** is currently active in eight European countries: Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal and the United Kingdom.

## **How to apply**

In order to apply, visit the project's page on **EMSP's** website and see the role descriptions.

<http://www.emsp.org/projects/believe-and-achieve>

<http://www.emsp.org/projects/believe-and-achieve/267-role-descriptions>

**EMSP** will receive the applications and liaise with the corporate partners in view of the interviews, then guide the successful candidates through the entire process, including offering individual coaching and monitoring their progress throughout the internship.

## **We have the will. We need the way**

At the start of the “**Believe and Achieve**” project, in 2014, **EMSP** ran a survey among 1,300 young people (18-35 years) living with MS in Europe. 65% of respondents said they are either employed or doing voluntary work. This demonstrates that the majority of young people with MS who are able to work, are willing to do so.

The main challenge for those already working is that, without proper support at the workplace, they risk ending their professional careers way ahead of time. A study<sup>1</sup> shows that 80% of them usually stop working within 15 years of the onset of the condition.

A raw estimate from **EMSP**'s MS Barometer 2013 shows that around 50% of all those living with MS in Europe are believed to be out of work.

## **EMSP: Raising the voice of people with MS**

Employment is high on the agenda of the **European Multiple Sclerosis Platform (EMSP)**. Through our network of 39 MS societies in 34 countries, and with the support of our partners, we aim to also ensure high quality and equitable treatment, support for research and empowerment for a European MS population estimated to be above 700,000 people, and growing.

<sup>1</sup> Work Foundation, Fit for work?,

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