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From the Editors

JOURNAL FOR PERSPECTIVES OF ECONOMIC POLITICAL AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION. JOURNAL FOR MENTAL CHANGES is a continuation of the Journal for Mental Changes. Perspectives of Economic Political and Social Integration has been issued permanently since 1995. The intention to change the title was to strengthen directly the issue of integration and its factor which build a multidimensional infrastructure and environmental climate for peace, social stability and sustainable development. The Journal is an interdisciplinary forum for research and application concerning social, economic, political, environmental and religious issues related with macrosystem transformations. Rapid changes in Central and Eastern Europe since 1989 are so intense that coping with them brings along many desired and undesired consequences. Mental schemes must be broken through habits, biased perception and evaluations changed in order to learn economic behavior better suited to the market environment.

On its way to integration after the collapse of communism, Europe encounters stressful events such as civil wars, regional conflicts, ethnic problems, poverty, increasing unemployment, closing down of many medium and large enterprises, etc. Ordinary citizens do not know how to be more constructive or how to arrive at social, economic and political consensus in the

new situation. Neither do university academics possess any sure models which might lead to a new integration. Some European social scientists, behavioral scientists, and humanists (represented by psychologists, sociologists, political scientists, economists, lawyers, ecologists and theologians) cooperating within a kind of informal network have come to the conclusion that a key research area in a time of macrosystem transformation in Europe must be mental changes as the cognitive and behavioral base of social and economic integration. In order to address the complex problems of macrotransformation, cooperation is required between people working in the academic environment and others working in areas such as regional government, international and local banking, unemployment offices, trade union leadership, company management, pastoral care and church leadership.

The Journal is intended to publish original theses, studies and research papers concerning economic, behavioral and cognitive bases of change in Central and Eastern Europe within the scope of global transformation of Europe. The Journal wants to be a forum where methods, workshops, polemics, essays, reviews, projects and case studies which promote good examples of social, economic, political, environmental or religious integration on an international, regional or local level can be presented.

Volume XVII which covers No 1-2 is devoted to the Europlacement Project and the Problems of Employing Young Graduates in Europe. This is really the issue of human capital cumulated in the graduates during their school learning, i.e. how to help the individual persons and the society as well, in actualizing the human capital in a real labour market situation. The real question is how to avoid the human capital depreciating which consequence is a large – scale disintegration.

The Volume gives a chance to reflect the social sciences, economic, and behavioral questions related with lifelong guidance for placement. These issues are illustrated with the national

case studies from the Italian regions (Parma, Catania), Austria, United Kingdom, Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia, and from Poland.

Special thanks to the P.T. Guest Editors who had collected a very attractive volume which combines both interdisciplinary approach and international European experiences in employing young graduates in Europe

The Editors

Preface

Young people are one of the groups most at risk regarding the entry into the labour market. The process through which young people enter the labour market once they have completed their full-time education can be complex and, at times, lengthy. In the lifelong prospect the transition from the initial education to working life, independent if it is the secondary or tertiary education is understood as the first and most important life experience in frame of relationship between learning and vocational working. The transition is one of a number of issues, which youth face growing to the maturity, among others like getting economic independence, leaving household and forming a family, and personal development. The current crisis makes it even more difficult to overcome these obstacles.

In the new economy there is an increasing need for workers to gain transferable competencies, in order to be able to update and adjust their knowledge stock to different contexts. Starting from the assessment of their own well-being, measured through individual “capabilities”, it is important to transfer such competencies to young people that would enable them to find a good job or start an activity of their own.

In other words there is necessary to help young people to develop their employability, which refers to a person’s capability of gaining employment. It is strongly influenced by the knowl-

edge, skills, competencies, motivation and attitudes of a person wishing to gain employment or self employment as well as by the institutions in and rules of the labour market.

Following the *European Reference Tools*, the role of lifelong guidance (LLG) is crucial to increase productivity, lifelong learning, employability and labour market participation. Job placement offices should certificate job seekers' non formal and informal learning outcomes as this would help them stand out in the labour market.

Therefore, a multidisciplinary partnership of 8 Member States representing different European realities such as the Mediterranean (Italy and Spain), Anglo-Saxon (the UK), Central Europe (Austria) and new member states (Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) with previous experience in the topic have worked together in the Europlacement Leonardo da Vinci project to improve and develop guidance and placement services at European level that meet the emerging criteria of the knowledge society.

The main aims of the Europlacement project EXPERTISING AND SHARING LIFELONG GUIDANCE FOR PLACEMENT (LLP-LDV/TOI/08/IT/460) has been to transfer an integrated system of good practices to improve graduates' path of transition from higher education to the labour market, creating e-learning pathways for job seekers and for career guidance practitioners. The partnership also analyzed the socio-economic context and conducted a SWOT analysis on the labour market in order to present some general facts describing the present situation of graduates in the partners countries.

This special issue of the journal is devoted to present some relevant results of the Europlacement projects. The Journal is divided in two sections: the first one *Lifelong Guidance for Placement in the broad context of Social Economy* concentrates on some general facts and the second one centres on *National Case Studies*.

The first section *Lifelong Guidance for Placement in the broad context of Social Economy* is composed of 8 articles. The first article

presents the main indicators proposed by economics literature to analyze the ease or difficulty with which transition takes place and the degree of success in terms of the outcome, concentrating on the incidence of problems in transition as measured by the degree of unemployment amongst young people and their participation in the labour market. The following article presents the lifelong guidance genesis in the European debate and the broad context of youth employability. The third article analysis the valorisation of graduates competences in the process of guidance. The fourth article is devoted to analyze tools used by career guidance for nobilities. The fifth focuses on the validation of non formal and informal learning with a brief overview on the concept of lifelong learning in the European Union and the presentation of tools for studying informal and non-formal learning. The sixth article outlines the potential and relevance of e-Portfolio as a tool for enhancing competence recognition and highlights the potential of e-Portfolio to function as an effective support application that facilitates the transition from university to job placement. The seventh article focuses on the use of modern multimedia technologies and ICT for organizing professional e-Portfolios for students. The eighth article closes this section with a presentation of the SWOT methodology used by Europlacement partners.

The second section *National Case Studies* presents the case studies of the partnership comprising the 8 Member States with special references to the quantitative and qualitative analyses of transition from university to the labour market.

They introduce the complex situation country by country: Problems of employing young people, university placement services and changing role of Universities in Italy; Difficulties in dealing with the process of transition into working life, in the context of economic crisis in Spain with some examples associated with the Andalusia reality; Employment situation of graduates in Austria; Some remedies for beating the effect of the recent

recession in the UK; Students' career path support at the Veliko Turnovo University in Bulgaria; Placement difficulties faced by young female engineers in Hungary; Placement of the graduates, situation in Slovakia, and Situation of the youth on the labour market in Poland.

Renata Livraghi
Czesław Noworol
Gabriella Pappadà

*Lifelong Guidance for Placement
in the Broad Context
of Social Economy*

Augusta Badriotti
Gabriella Pappadà*

Higher Education and Graduate Employment in Europe

ABSTRACT

The matching between workers' skills and job requirements is a topic of high concern for policymakers, potential workers and enterprises. Jobs demands is more and more technological and new types of job roles continue to emerge. To face affectively this increasing demands of specific competences, social and personal competencies must be accompanied by specific technical knowledge that graduate institutes must produce but often its production is below the desired or overproduced in sectors in which labour demand has declined.

This paper aims at analysing the employment and work of graduates from institutions of higher education in European countries providing a first overview to the education-occupation link and then analysing graduate employment and work and then we focus on some EU countries in order to study in depth the functioning the policies used to foster school to work transition.

KEYWORDS: graduates, human capital, skills, labour market transition

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INTRODUCTION

The Europlacement project arose from the desire of Ceres and University of Parma to analyse young graduates' transitory pathway from university to work in order to continue their project YOUTH, "Pathways to work: current practices and future needs for the labour market integration of young people" (Call for the tenders No. VT/2006/045), carried out from 2006 to 2008. The YOUTH project drew the authors' attention to the difficulties faced by European young people when they enter the labour market¹. Such difficulties are generalised, including both the lower educated and the higher educated. Often, enterprises claim that education is not sufficient to prepare the learner to be adequately competent for the job. Moreover, in order to face organizational and technical changes, workers need to be flexible and competent. In the new economy, there is an increasing need for workers to gain transferrable competencies in order to be able to update and adjust their knowledge base to different contexts. Starting from the assessment of their own well-being, measured through individual "capabilities", it is important to transfer such competencies to young people that would enable them to find a good job or start an activity of their own.

Therefore, the process through which young people enter the labour market once they have completed their full-time education can be complex and, at times, lengthy.

The main indicators proposed by economics literature attempt to take into account the following two aspects of this process:

- the ease or difficulty with which transition takes place; and,
- the degree of success in terms of the outcome.

¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=448&furtherNews=yes>.

In this framework, two main types of indicators can be concentrated on:

1. the incidence of problems in transition as measured by the degree of unemployment amongst young people;
2. participation in the labour market (activity rates, employment rates).

Matching workers' skills and job requirements is a topic of serious concern for policymakers, potential workers and enterprises. In fact, the expansion of higher education has produced an increase in the number of graduates entering the market but, at the same time, the transition to the labour market has become more and more complex. Job requirements have become more technological and new types of job roles continue to emerge. For graduates to be able to effectively face this increasing demand for particular competences, both social and personal, these competences must be accompanied by specific technical knowledge that graduate institutes must provide. However, their production often falls below what is desired, or is excessive in sectors where labour demand has declined.

In order to optimise the existing different pathways across occupations it is essential to strengthen the relationship between education and the world of work by improving the transition from education to work, as stated by the European Union on several occasions, and by reducing the length of time spent in alternating temporary jobs and unemployment. Therefore, the current economic crisis has worsened the process of transition due to the contraction of employment. Since young people often hold temporary jobs, they represent one of the most adversely affected groups of workers.

This paper aims at analysing the employment and work of graduates from institutions of higher education in European countries. In the second part of this Journal, more country specific information, provided by the EUROPLACEMENT partners through the national case studies they carried out, will be pro-

vided, with the focus on certain selected aspects of the transition from university to work.

In the analysis, the EU LFS has been used as the main source of data, which covers the EU-27 for the period 2000-2009. Although the LFS data is not collected using a common standardised questionnaire, the degree of harmonisation of the concepts and definitions used is high. The LFS uses the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-88) and the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-97) nomenclatures for occupations and education (both levels and fields), respectively. ISCED-97 is used to classify individuals into three distinct levels of education: low (ISCED levels 0–2), medium (ISCED levels 3–4), and high (ISCED levels 5–6).

THE AGE OF TRANSITION FROM UNIVERSITY TO WORK

To effectively analyse young European graduates' transition from education to employment the focus needs to be on a specific age group, i.e., those aged 25-29. In most countries, students graduate by the age of 25 and, before obtaining an adequate job, they experience a period of unemployment that can be of varying length depending on the economic conjuncture and the type of degree held by the graduate. Eurostat data do not allow for an analysis of the transition of young graduates to the labour market based on type of degree but they can provide a great deal of useful information to draw an overall picture.

In this context, the first element to be considered is activity rate: the active participation of people in this age group reflects the fact that, after having obtained a university degree, students look for work actively. In the European Union, the average activity rate for young people aged 25-29 is quite high (89.1% for EU27 in 2009), although the economic crisis has affected it in some countries. In member states such as the Netherlands,

Table 1. Employment rates of 25-29 graduates.

Country	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
EU 27	82,0	82,7	82,3	82,1	82,0	81,8	83,1	83,8	84,1	82,1
Belgium	91,2	87,7	89,3	88,2	91,0	88,5	87,5	88,5	89,1	88,6
Bulgaria	76,2	75,1	71,4	73,2	79,6	78,9	82,0	86,3	87,3	83,0
Czech Republic	79,8	80,7	82,1	79,8	81,1	79,3	80,8	79,9	80,2	76,7
Denmark	83,3	86,8	84,0	75,9	78,9	83,7	84,0	86,4	88,7	84,4
Germany	87,5	86,9	86,6	86,8	85,1	84,1	86,0	87,2	88,1	87,7
Estonia	83,2	79,2	79,2	72,3	80,3	83,0	89,6	85,6	78,2	76,9
Ireland	92,0	90,7	89,9	88,4	88,1	88,7	88,9	90,0	87,6	82,3
Greece	71,7	70,9	72,4	72,7	74,5	73,2	75,7	75,0	75,9	75,9
Spain	71,1	73,7	73,5	74,1	75,6	78,0	80,0	82,1	80,1	75,4
France	82,7	83,7	83,6	83,3	84,1	83,6	84,1	84,6	86,6	83,8
Italy	62,2	65,7	64,8	63,8	60,6	56,1	60,5	59,6	61,4	57,6
Cyprus	92,2	92,3	91,1	91,3	89,5	86,7	85,5	87,1	86,5	83,9
Latvia	84,1	85,5	83,4	84,1	84,4	82,9	83,1	87,3	87,8	81,6
Lithuania	84,6	83,1	84,8	88,5	86,5	87,3	89,2	87,6	87,3	85,4
Luxembourg	74,9	83,1	82,7	82,8	83,4	83,8	83,8	81,9	78,5	84,2
Hungary	81,8	85,0	82,0	81,2	85,1	83,9	82,7	81,8	83,3	81,3
Malta	93,7	94,9	95,3	88,6	95,5	90,1	95,0	92,5	94,7	93,1
Netherlands	94,6	94,4	93,7	94,0	92,1	91,5	92,7	93,2	93,3	92,6
Austria	88,9	87,1	90,0	84,7	84,3	84,5	86,6	87,2	86,1	86,4
Poland	80,3	81,2	80,8	81,0	80,2	80,0	82,1	84,6	85,2	84,0
Portugal	87,8	87,5	87,3	84,6	84,2	82,2	82,5	79,6	81,2	83,1
Romania	86,0	83,5	85,3	88,0	85,0	84,6	85,4	86,6	85,8	84,0
Slovenia	88,8	89,5	86,7	84,3	86,9	87,1	84,6	84,8	87,4	84,9
Slovakia	83,9	82,2	87,2	86,0	81,2	83,1	86,5	82,7	81,8	79,1
Finland	83,2	86,3	85,4	85,5	83,7	85,9	86,8	86,9	87,6	83,2
Sweden	74,0	80,1	80,7	80,2	78,7	79,6	80,9	83,0	84,2	81,5
United Kingdom	91,2	91,7	90,6	90,8	89,7	90,0	90,0	90,2	89,6	88,8

Source: Eurostat website, 9th June 2010.

Slovenia and Malta the participation rate is still over 93 percent. In contrast, Italy reports the lowest activity rate in the EU among those aged 25-29 (only 68% in 2009 against the 81% in 2000).

The rates for female graduates, when compared to those for males, are generally a few percentage points lower, while significantly lower in Estonia, where the difference stands at 26 points.

The data above highlights the importance of graduate education for entering the labour market for this population segment: after obtaining their degree, graduates actively participate in the labour market by both being more easily hired and having more incentive in the job search than the other categories.

As for the employment performance of this group, the results are less positive with the persistence of those facing difficulty finding a job and being unemployed. This also represents the critical phase in which young graduates have to acquire certain experience, need time before entering the labour market and, when their search for job placement is successful, normally change their job more than once before obtaining permanent employment or professional status.

The transition between leaving the university and obtaining a good job is a critical point and strongly requires universities and businesses to work together. Table 1 above shows that c. 82% of young Europeans aged 25-29 are employed in 2009 (84% in 2008). Regarding the member states, only in Malta and the Netherlands does youth employment exceed the 90% mark. The lowest level of employment in this category is presently found in Italy (57.6% in 2009 against 62.2% in 2000), while the youth employment level in Spain, the second lowest, is 75.4% and in Greece, the third lowest, is 75.9%. The data mirrors the figures for participation although emphasising a narrow link between market performance and the willingness or propensity to obtain a job.

Once again, the employment rate for women is generally a few percentage points lower than that for men, but in Estonia

(32% in 2008 and 22% in 2009), in the Slovak Republic (15% in 2008 and 11% in 2009) and in Finland (10% in 2008 and 2009), it is much lower. Surprisingly, in Cyprus, Portugal and Romania, the percentage for women employed is slightly higher than that for men. This is also due to the fact that from 2008 to 2009, the rates for males were affected by strong reductions.

Therefore, regarding the employment rates of graduates males aged 25-29, most EU member states registered a reduction from 2008 to 2009 (- 3 points in the EU 27 average). The most remarkable reductions concern the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Spain, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia and Finland, while an increase was observed in the case of Luxembourg (85.1% in 2009, 78.4% in 2008 and 70.9% in 2000).

Regarding, the female employment rates, the most remarkable reductions concern Bulgaria, Denmark, Spain and Latvia, whereas Luxembourg continues to have an increase in the employment rates (83.4% in 2009, 78.7% in 2008 and 78.4% in 2000), Estonia's situation is improving from having been affected by high reduction rates from 2000 to 2008 (69.3% in 2009, 64.3% in 2008 and 78.8% in 2000), Portugal is returning to its past employment rates (85.5% in 2009, 79.7% in 2008 and 86.4% in 2000).

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE LABOUR MARKET FOR THE UNDER-40S IN EUROPE

To be able to see the importance of graduate education on transition to the labour market any further, it is useful to compare the employment data for different age groups. The age 25-29 is generally regarded the age of transition in which workers acquire professional competences and skills and in which the job status has not yet been defined and where workers often must gain different kinds of job experience before obtaining a suitable job. A closer picture can be gained by also analysing the

age group 30-34 and the general group under 40, as, by the age of 39, one can presume that workers have defined their professional status and reached a stable position.

The presence of graduates increases greatly when looking at the age group 30-34. In this sub-group, 88 percent of graduates have a job, with peaks of over 90 percent in many countries such as the Netherlands and Malta.

As regards the general situation of graduate workers under 40, this last session is devoted to analysing the rates of unemployment and employment in the last decade.

The EU27 unemployment rates increased from 2008 to 2009, overcoming the value registered in 2000. The economic crisis also affected countries such as Ireland, Hungary, Sweden and the UK, where the rates of unemployment in 2000 were around 2%. Ireland is the Member State that has suffered the greatest increase in the unemployment rate. Greece, Spain and Italy still hold the worst positions. In 2007, Spain and Italy registered the best results obtained in the whole decade, thanks to the widespread use of temporary contracts, but the current crisis affected these atypical workers first of all.

Table 2. Unemployment rates for graduates under the age of 40.

Country	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
EU 27	6,1	5,5	6,1	6,2	6,4	6,4	5,8	5,0	5,0	6,5
Belgium	3,1	4,3	4,1	4,5	4,9	5,7	5,8	4,7	4,6	5,6
Bulgaria	7,9	9,5	10,3	8,6	7,4	5,2	4,5	2,8	2,9	3,3
Czech Republic	3,8	4,0	2,3	3,2	2,3	2,9	3,0	2,0	2,3	3,8
Denmark	3,3	4,4	5,3	7,1	5,2	4,4	4,3	3,7	2,4	4,9
Germany	3,4	3,2	3,4	4,3	4,7	5,1	4,3	3,6	3,3	3,5
Ireland	1,9	2,0	2,8	3,3	2,8	3,0	3,0	3,1	3,9	8,3
Greece	12,1	11,4	11,0	10,4	11,6	11,9	11,3	11,6	10,8	11,8
Spain	14,0	10,1	11,5	10,8	10,5	8,5	7,6	6,5	8,0	12,4
France	6,7	5,9	6,7	6,9	7,9	7,4	6,7	6,2	5,0	6,4

Italy	11,7	10,2	10,2	10,1	9,5	10,8	9,1	7,7	7,8	9,3
Cyprus	3,4	3,1	3,2	5,2	3,9	6,4	5,9	4,1	3,6	5,9
Latvia	7,6	:	7,7	4,5	:	4,1	:	3,5	4,2	9,9
Lithuania	11,0	8,4	8,3	5,6	7,2	4,7	:	2,4	4,0	7,6
Luxembourg	:	2,3	3,1	5,6	5,8	3,4	3,8	3,8	:	5,7
Hungary	2,0	1,4	2,5	1,8	3,1	3,6	3,9	4,1	3,6	5,3
Netherlands	1,5	1,5	1,8	2,7	3,0	2,9	2,1	1,5	1,3	2,1
Austria	2,2	2,2	2,3	3,2	3,8	3,4	3,5	3,2	2,1	3,0
Poland	7,7	9,0	9,4	9,7	10,1	9,6	7,9	6,1	5,3	5,8
Portugal	3,7	3,6	5,4	7,0	6,2	9,1	9,2	10,8	9,5	8,4
Romania	5,6	5,5	5,3	4,4	4,7	5,8	5,6	3,9	3,7	5,9
Slovenia	3,2	2,8	3,9	4,9	4,0	4,6	4,9	4,6	4,9	4,9
Slovakia	7,3	8,0	5,2	5,9	8,4	6,3	4,4	5,8	5,0	5,9
Finland	6,5	4,9	4,8	4,2	5,8	4,4	3,9	3,8	3,6	4,6
Sweden	2,2	2,9	3,6	4,6	5,3	6,8	5,5	4,5	4,1	5,3
United Kingdom	2,4	2,5	3,2	2,9	2,7	3,1	3,5	3,0	3,6	5,0

Source: see table 1.

The employment rates for people under 40 are lightly more homogeneous among the 27 countries than those for workers aged 25-29. This is due to the fact that in this age group, it is generally presumed that workers should have obtained a more stable job already. However, Italy is still in the worst position, even though its results improved in comparison with the situation of the age group 25-29.

When comparing men's situation to that of women, it emerges that there is a gap of about 15 – 20 percentage points in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary and Slovakia, where the female participation is around 65-70%. By means of observing the variations from Year 2008 to Year 2009, it is possible to confirm that the reduction in employment rates is a common problem round Europe, affecting men more than women.

Table 3. Employment rates for graduates under the age of 40.

Country	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
EU 27	83,5	83,8	83,5	83,6	83,2	83,1	83,7	84,5	84,8	83,2
Belgium	91,1	87,9	87,9	87,4	88,0	87,0	86,7	87,6	86,7	85,0
Bulgaria	82,0	80,0	79,2	80,5	82,8	84,2	86,1	88,2	89,3	87,6
Czech Republic	83,4	84,3	84,5	84,0	83,4	82,1	81,3	80,7	78,0	75,3
Denmark	89,1	88,5	87,6	84,5	86,7	87,1	88,3	90,3	92,2	90,2
Germany	89,2	89,5	88,8	88,5	87,5	87,5	88,8	89,7	89,9	89,7
Estonia	85,9	78,6	81,4	80,4	75,8	83,5	87,7	86,2	82,4	79,5
Ireland	88,4	87,0	85,8	85,5	85,5	86,2	86,6	87,2	85,9	81,3
Greece	80,7	79,9	80,6	80,8	81,3	80,0	81,1	81,0	81,5	81,2
Spain	72,0	74,1	74,6	75,8	77,2	79,3	80,7	82,1	81,1	77,5
France	78,0	78,8	78,5	79,0	77,9	77,9	78,6	79,8	82,1	80,7
Italy	78,0	79,0	79,0	77,9	77,0	72,6	72,5	72,3	73,6	71,6
Cyprus	86,2	90,2	90,0	89,1	89,2	85,6	86,5	88,3	87,7	84,8
Latvia	85,2	87,2	81,5	85,1	86,1	85,9	89,2	88,0	87,6	82,5
Lithuania	81,3	85,4	83,7	89,0	85,3	87,2	89,5	88,7	88,3	86,2
Luxembourg	76,8	84,7	83,9	80,6	81,8	84,3	87,0	86,6	84,2	85,0
Hungary	84,1	84,8	84,7	83,8	82,6	84,0	83,7	82,1	83,1	80,1
Malta	85,4	86,2	85,8	86,8	88,8	85,4	85,5	88,9	89,7	88,0
Netherlands	93,1	92,3	92,7	91,3	90,3	90,7	91,9	92,6	92,7	91,8
Austria	90,0	90,3	90,1	88,6	86,6	88,1	88,5	89,0	89,6	88,4
Poland	86,3	84,0	84,9	84,6	82,5	83,1	84,0	85,6	86,3	85,8
Portugal	91,2	90,7	88,9	88,2	88,2	85,7	84,2	83,5	84,7	84,1
Romania	88,9	88,5	88,0	89,8	88,7	87,4	88,1	89,5	88,4	86,2
Slovenia	92,5	93,4	91,8	91,1	92,9	91,7	91,5	91,6	91,9	90,6
Slovakia	84,0	85,3	87,0	87,0	81,3	84,1	85,0	82,8	81,3	77,0
Finland	84,9	87,7	87,8	87,2	86,1	86,5	86,7	87,2	87,6	85,7
Sweden	78,0	83,8	83,3	82,5	82,1	82,8	84,6	86,8	87,6	85,7
United Kingdom	89,6	89,2	88,6	88,5	88,9	88,5	88,1	88,3	87,7	86,2

Source: see table 1.

TRANSITION TO THE LABOUR MARKET IN SELECTED COUNTRIES

Europlacement project focuses on certain selected countries which represent different clusters in Europe. Based on the outcomes from the YOUTH project (Ghignoni, Pappadà, 2010), five different clusters can be identified in the analysis of youngsters' flexicurity in Europe:

Denmark and the Netherlands – have initiated a process of “flexicurity” for both adults and young people.

Ireland and the United Kingdom – characterized by a high level of flexibility, but have not yet spread the concept of flexicurity.

Central and northern European countries – raising the debate on flexicurity for young people.

Mediterranean countries – Italy, characterized by the risk of job insecurity, and Spain, characterized by very restrictive legislation against the dismissals of permanent workers and a widespread use of temporary contracts.

Eastern European countries – characterised by not widespread internal and external flexibility and low level of participation in the labour market by the youth.

Starting from these results, the Europlacement coordinators decided to focus attention on countries representing the four less developed clusters in terms of flexicurity of youngsters: the UK representing a country with a good participation of youngsters and high levels of flexibility; Austria representing Central Europe, with a good approach to flexicurity practices; Italy, Spain and Poland (which is closer to Mediterranean group than to the Eastern one) with their problems of insecurity and widespread temporary jobs; Hungary, Slovakia and Bulgaria representing the last cluster, with some peculiarities due to their past experience of socialism.

The table in the annex gives evidence of the main issues and challenges interested these five clusters and reports of how, in

Denmark and the Netherlands, especially weak groups of immigrants and the unskilled face problems in the labour market while, in general, graduates attain good jobs.

In the Europlacement project, the partners focus their attention on graduated young people in order to analyse the transition from university to work in a selected group of countries. A disaggregated analysis of the labour force for the different age categories is difficult but it can be presumed that the employment rate for 25-29 year olds is, in general, higher than the national average as a high proportion of this age group is made up of graduates. In Hungary, Austria and Poland, the percentage of those employed in this category is higher than the national employment rates by more than 10 per cent. The participation rate for this group is also higher than the global average while the unemployment rates generally tend to be lower. Despite the fact that graduates have more opportunities in the labour market than unskilled people, the process of transition is difficult, sometimes long and depends on economic cycles.

Regarding the age at which students obtain their university degree, the age observed in the selected countries is approximately 25 with an upper boundary of 28 in Spain and a lower boundary of 24 in Hungary and even lower in the UK. Normally, most graduates find a job within one year after graduation although the percentages for graduate unemployment one year after graduation vary from country to country: in Poland, Italy and Austria nearly 20% of graduates are jobless. In Poland and in Hungary, these values tend to fade into insignificance after 5 years, but still remain high in Italy (7.2%). In Slovakia, the match between young graduates and a suitable job is quite high and only 2% of graduates are not hired within one year from their obtaining their degree.

Besides the importance of the data on transition from education to work, the quality of the jobs graduate students obtain is also vital. New types of atypical labour contracts, certainly

more flexible but also less secure than permanent hirings, have severely hit young people and also young graduates. In Italy, atypical jobs affect 12% of employees aged 25-49, but – as far as graduates one year after graduation are considered – the proportion increases dramatically to more than 50%, with a high incidence of part-time, temporary, and consultation or project work. In Spain the proportion of people aged 25-29 with such contracts has reached 30%, among whom more than 40% have temporary or unstable jobs. In Slovakia, Hungary and Austria, the phenomenon is even more evident and affects more young graduates than the other groups.

CONCLUSIONS

The projects YOUTH and EUROPLACEMENT have confirmed that, although young people are a resource of mainly well-educated people with good ability to use new technologies and a greater propensity to learn, inefficiencies in the labour market do not allow its full use. These inefficiencies are prevalent in Europe and, in the last 10 years, have deteriorated, in some cases encouraging phenomena of segmentation, precarious work, unsatisfactory working conditions, low wages and high unemployment. The current crisis makes it even more difficult to overcome these obstacles. When analysing the employment and unemployment rates for the years 2008 and 2009, an escalation in the situation of graduates under the age of 40, especially that of men, was encountered. This gives evidence to the assumption that the crisis has complicated the inclusion of graduates in stable jobs. This phenomenon also confirms the hypothesis supported by the research group of the frequent use of young people through flexible forms of work which ensure an adequate response to business cycles and economic competitiveness. The case of Spain and Italy, where temporary jobs to

employ young people are extensively in use, provides a good example: the youth unemployment rates registered the worst situation in the last ten years. Therefore, the authors wish to conclude this essay by inviting the reader to reflect on the issues regarding young workers entering the labour market with atypical contracts: should they be considered an instrument for fostering, the stepping stone or a means of providing powerful flexibility to better meet the requirements of the job application?

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ANNEX

Clusters of countries	EU member state group results compared to YOUTH (Pappadà, 2010) labour market <i>(analysis of the age groups 15-19, 20-24 and 25-29 – people with all levels of education)</i>	
	Characteristics	Challenges
Denmark and Netherlands	<p>This group has the best performance in the labour market in terms of rates for youth employment and flexicurity. The labour market has a good degree of flexibility and working hours. This flexibility is expressed in different way: in the Netherlands, part-time work is more frequent while temporary contracts are widespread in Denmark. Public expenditure in labour policies corresponds to a high percentage of GDP.</p>	<p>A major challenge concerns the issue of the inclusion of certain groups of vulnerable young people such as immigrants and the unskilled. Despite the good market performance and labour policies, vulnerable groups may not be well integrated neither in the labour market nor the society.</p>
Austria, France, Sweden, Finland, Germany, Belgium, Slovenia	<p>In these countries, flexibility is quite widespread, although with different characteristics between the countries; for example, Austria is ranked third, after Denmark and Holland, in the path of flexicurity. The indicators on the education of young people are generally good. Regarding the labour market indicators there is a rift between the countries. For example, France and Belgium have high employment levels, while Germany and Austria have a tradition of worker-students. In general, these countries public expenditure in labour policies corresponds to a high percentage of GDP.</p>	<p>One challenge concerns the support to employment facing the crisis that is affecting the labour market. Serious action should be taken by both the supply side and the demand side, to reduce the competence gap and to promote the matching. Germany, which for years has been a good model of dual education, is now in crisis, mainly because of the rigidity of their system. France with their long established contracts alternation is also in crisis. Another challenge is the problem of inclusion of some groups of young people with difficulties (immigrants, the poorly educated and qualified) and the segmentation of certain local areas in these countries with greater territorial extension. There are groups of youths belonging to vulnerable groups who have serious problems to complete their studies following the traditional education systems.</p>

United Kingdom and Ireland	These countries are characterized by low job security because the protection against permanent contracts is the lowest in Europe. The level of youth participation in the labour market is good. The public expenditure in active social policies is discrete.	The UK should increase productivity and reduce the disadvantages in the labour market faced by the low-skilled by encouraging learning. Ireland should increase participation in the labour market.
Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Poland	These are countries with poor performance in the labour market. Employment rates are low and unemployment high. Long-term unemployment rates are also high. The degree of labour flexibility of youngsters is higher than that of adults, favoured in the Mediterranean countries by atypical contracts introduced to counter the high levels of protection of permanent jobs. The overall public expenditure in labour policy is at a good level although not quite efficient, because it is low for active policies and employment services.	In these countries, and particularly in Portugal, the percentage of unskilled workers is much higher than the average of the previous groups. Very often, job vacancies demand for low-skilled workers. It is therefore desirable to improve education indicators in order to trigger a virtuous circle: the more people educated, the more the economic system can invest in innovative technologies that need high-skilled individuals to be managed. Moreover, it is necessary 1) to promote measures to encourage the integration of young people and tackling the alternation of jobs with fixed-term unemployment, 2) to promote the supply of female labour through appropriate balance policies, 3) to strengthen active policies and employment services.
Greece and Poland	<p><i>Greece and Poland come very close in the cluster analysis:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Greek registers more similarities with the Eastern countries than most of the other Mediterranean countries, because it has a very poor expenditure record on social policies.</i> ➤ <i>Poland is very close to Mediterranean countries, especially regarding young people's participation in the labour market and discrete performance indicators on education.</i> 	

<p>Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria</p>	<p>Countries with poor performance in the youth labour market. Employment rates are low and unemployment high. There are also high rates of long-term unemployment. Even the turnover, or the entry and exit from employment, is lower than that of adults (except for Estonia), indicating, first, a brake on labour flexibility in general. Another issue is lack of youth participation in the market. Countries that have a greater tendency towards external flexibility are Hungary and Latvia, while less protection (job security) through permanent contracts is found in Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The expenditure, as a percentage of GDP, in labour policies is rather low when compared to a high percentage of beneficiaries to these policies, which results in reduced expenditure per capita. Alarming poverty rates for young people in these countries was also recorded.</p>	<p>These countries are characterized by two phenomena:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) migration; 2) the decentralization of production of many Western countries that move their businesses in countries such as Romania. This leads to strong wage differentials between companies, supported also by the low weight of trade unions and weak regulatory labour market. <p>It is necessary to reduce poverty and improve the performance of the youth labour market in general, strengthen active employment policies, introduce flexicurity strategies and improve the level of skills.</p>
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Czeslaw Noworol*

Lifelong Guidance

ABSTRACT

The Lifelong Guidance is one of the most crucial tool for implementing the strategy of Lifelong Learning and for reaching the 2020 benchmarks of the EC by each of the Member States. Career guidance refers to services and activities intended to assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. Lifelong guidance should start as an early process that assist children and young people upon active career planning and personal development. The transition to a knowledge-based economy and society commits to develop citizens and economies through lifelong learning where education and training have a fundamental place in the implementing progression of the revised Lisbon strategy for jobs and growth.

KEYWORDS: Lifelong Guidance, Lifelong Learning, 2020 benchmarks of the EC.

“With a view to ensuring the effective exercise of the right to vocational guidance, the Parties undertake, provide or promote, as necessary, a service which will assist all persons, including the handicapped,

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to solve problems related to occupational choice and progress, with due regard to the individual's characteristics and their relation to occupational opportunity; this assistance should be available free of charge, both to young persons, including schoolchildren, and to adults."

EUROPEAN SOCIAL CHARTER (1996 Revision) Article 9
The right to vocational guidance

GENESIS OF LIFELONG GUIDANCE

Definition

Lifelong guidance is the most recent step in the hitherto history of the development of vocational guidance and career counselling. The definition of vocational guidance appeared for the first time in the official formula of the National Vocational Guidance Association in 1937 in the USA. There it was stated that it is *"the process of assisting the individual to choose an occupation, prepare for it, enter upon and progress in it"*. Disregarding the choice of a given occupation, the definition seems to be quite good even nowadays as it takes into account the lifelong dimension.

A second dimension, that of lifewide seems to appear in the Super revision of the definition: *"The process of helping a person to develop and accept an integrated and adequate picture of himself and of his role in the world of work, to test this concept against reality, and to convert it into reality, with satisfaction to himself and benefit to society"* (Super, 1951, p. 92).

Thus, taking into account both these definitions as the origin of the concept for lifelong guidance, it becomes easier to understand the current definition by OECD. It is based on a milestone EU document, i.e., the Council Resolution (2004), which took into account the definition of lifelong guidance, and was developed by Cedefop (Sultana, 2004), and presented in the handbook

for policy makers: *“Career guidance refers to services and activities intended to assist individuals of any age and at any point throughout their lives to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. Such services may be found in schools, universities and colleges, in training institutions, in public employment services, in the workplace, in the voluntary or community sector and in the private sector. The activities may take place on an individual or group basis, and may be face-to-face or at a distance (including help lines and web-based services). They include career information provision (in print, ICT-based and other forms), assessment and self-assessment tools, counselling interviews, career education programmes (to help individuals develop their self awareness, opportunity awareness, and career management skills), taster programmes (to sample options before choosing them), work search programmes, and transition services”* (OECD, 2004, p. 10).

The definition is quite complex, therefore, the meaning of lifelong guidance, not in the form of an outline of formal definition, but rather in that of explanation, was made clearer in the next Cedefop publication on the use of common European reference tools (Cedefop, 2005), in which it was stated that *“Guidance refers to a range of activities, which include for example information and advice giving, counselling, competence assessment, mentoring, advocacy, teaching decision-making and career management skills, that enable citizens of any age and at any point in their lives (lifelong) to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make meaningful educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which these capacities and competences are learned and/or used (lifewide). Guidance is provided in a range of settings: education, training, employment, community and private.”*

As suggested by the authors, the explanation is pivotal in avoiding ambiguity in the Member States, (Cedefop, 2005).

Another point of view is understanding that it has deep roots in classic vocational psychology, of which only two examples of

the concept's origin have been mentioned above. Nevertheless, these examples shed light on a deeper understanding of the two dimensions of human life concealed in the definitions lifelong and lifewide as a bridge between the classic concept of vocational guidance and the modern one of lifelong guidance.

Lifelong guidance in EU documents

The transition to a knowledge-based economy and society is committed to developing citizens and economies through lifelong learning where education and training have a fundamental place in the implementing progression of the revised Lisbon strategy for jobs and growth. It is a response to the continuous changes in education and employment policies arising from the Lisbon (2000) goals of making Europe the most competitive knowledge-based economy and society in the world, marked by social cohesion, by 2010.

In 2002, the Member States committed themselves to developing national lifelong learning strategies (Council Resolution, 2002), including formal, non-formal and informal learning at all levels of education and training, which starts from the pre-school and primary continues through the secondary and tertiary levels and ends at adult education. The resolution stressed the context of all learning activities undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within the spheres of private, civic, social or working life.

Consequently, any lifelong learning strategy should provide flexible learning pathways and effective transition points between systems and levels of education and training that avoid dead ends. An important aspect in all this is to provide a strategic overview and a coherent set of priorities (Council, 2008) while also identifying the resources needed for different measures, including a transparent system for recognition of prior learning.

It seems that the idea of lifelong learning (Härtel, Freibergova, Kasurinen, Schiersmann, Noworol, 2007) is a response to multiple transitions, which increasingly characterize citizens' lives: particularly from the World of Education (VET, higher education, further training, etc.) to the World of Work (employment, entrepreneurship, unemployment, etc.), (Banka, 2007; Härtel, Noworol, Bańka, Kremser, 2005).

The European Commission has recognized that it is not enough to provide citizens with educational chances but also necessary to guide them through their whole lifespan. Hence, the idea of lifelong guidance has started to play a key role in all major decisions that individuals have to take throughout their lives. In this respect, it can contribute to empowering individuals to manage their own career paths in a more rational way in the context of today's labour market, and to achieve a more secure balance between their personal and professional lives.

There is a political consensus at the international level that guidance is seen as a key strategic component for implementing lifelong learning and employment strategies at local, regional, national and European levels. A condition for effective guidance is continuing improvement of the ways in which education and employment systems reach social cohesion.

As the contemporary education and employment related choices facing young people change and become more and more complex, good guidance becomes increasingly important. Change and complexity arise not only from changes in jobs and career patterns, but also from the growing flexibility of the pathways that link education to working life. Such change and complexity constitute strong challenge to lifelong guidance, a challenge that should start as an early process assisting children and young people with active career planning and personal development.

The OECD report in the year 2000 established certain basic goals that are still relevant, and, to some extent, constitute the base indicators for benchmarks 2010:

- A large proportion of young people completing full upper-secondary education with a recognized qualification for either work, tertiary study or both;
- High level of knowledge and skills among young people at the end of the transition phase;
- A small proportion of teenagers not being at the one time in education and unemployed;
- A large proportion of young adults with a job after leaving education;
- Few young people remaining unemployed for lengthy periods after leaving education;
- Stable and positive employment and educational histories in the years after leaving upper secondary education; and
- An equitable distribution of outcomes by gender, social background and region.

Regarding Lifelong Guidance, the Council Resolution (2004) was a milestone document. In almost all later EU documents concerning LLG there are notes based on the Resolution, setting the key objectives for lifelong guidance policy for all European Union citizens, prioritizing their central role:

- refocusing guidance provision (1) to develop individuals' career competency to enable them to manage their lifelong and lifewide learning and work pathways and the transitions therein; and (2) to do this as an integral part of lifelong and lifewide education and training programmes;
- widening access to services so that each citizen can have access to guidance throughout their lives and at times, in locations, and in forms that respond to their needs;
- improving the quality of the services at national, regional and local levels, and, where appropriate, the assurance mechanisms for guidance services, information and products (including on-line services); and
- strengthening structures for policy and systems development at national and regional levels by involving appropriate key

players (such as ministries, social partners, employment services, service providers, guidance practitioners, education and training institutions, consumers, parents and youth).

Since the milestone Council Resolution (2004), there has been an increasing level of European wide understanding of the key role, played by lifelong guidance in the development of a knowledge-based society, social cohesion, reaching Lisbon goals in the member states and sustainable development of the European labour market.

The Recommendation (2006) by the European Parliament and the Council *on key competences for lifelong learning* emphasizes that the ability to search for education and training opportunities can be developed and supported by guidance processes towards personal fulfilment and professional development of citizens discernible by social integration.

Making use of the existing initiatives at the time, the Council Resolution of 15 November 2007 *on new skills for new jobs* aims at strengthening the identification of new types of jobs and skills needs at the European level. It stresses the role of lifelong guidance, which should enable jobseekers to identify the competence modules required to move to new jobs within the knowledge society.

A Cedefop (2008) forecast suggests that the total increase in employment in Europe between 2006 and 2015 will be over 12.5 million additional jobs at the highest qualification level (tertiary education) and almost 9.5 million jobs at the medium level, whereas the demand for jobs requiring low qualifications (lower secondary education) is to fall by 8.5 million. In 2015, high qualifications will be required for approximately 30% of jobs, whereas vocational qualifications will be needed for almost half of the rest. It is expected that this will increase the pressure on the upper and post-secondary levels of education, mostly to improve quality and access.

In 2007, the Member States set up a European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN), comprising voluntary access of Member States to increase the opportunities to learn from one another and to cooperate on developing policies, systems and practices in the field of lifelong guidance. Unfortunately the ELGPN do not emphasize cooperation and development of LLG at the national level of many Member States.

The European Parliament and Council Recommendation (2008) *on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning* is supposed to facilitate workers' mobility and help make lifelong guidance an essential part of education and employment policies and practices in the Member States.

The Council Conclusions (2008) *on adult learning* stress the responsibility of the Member States to establish quality information and guidance systems which are more personalized, fair and equitable to the economic, social and individual benefits.

The joint progress report of the Council and the Commission (2008) *on the implementation of the work programme 'Delivering lifelong learning for knowledge, creativity and innovation'* notes that "*particular attention must also be given to lifelong guidance*"

Council Resolution (2008) *on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies* points out four priority areas, focusing on lifelong guidance within each:

1. Encouraging the lifelong acquisition of career management skills;
2. Facilitating access by all citizens to guidance services;
3. Developing the quality assurance of guidance provision;
4. Encouraging coordination and cooperation among various national, regional and local stakeholders.

LIFELONG GUIDANCE, EMPLOYABILITY
AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Three publications (European Commission; OECD – Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2004, Cedefop, 2005, 2008a), intended as tools for policy and decision-makers as well as for stakeholders to support the implementation of the 2004 resolution and other above-mentioned EU documents, which are focused to supporting the development of national and regional guidance policies, systems and practices in the education and employment sectors. In general, Member States should establish and strengthen structures for more effective guidance policy formulation and implementation setting up their national guidance forums.

Corresponding to lifelong guidance, which is the domain of well educated professionals and counselling organizations providing service for citizens, there is employability, which refers to a person's capability of gaining employment. It is strongly influenced by the knowledge, skills, competencies, motivation and attitudes of a person wishing to gain employment as well as by the institutions in and rules of the labour market. Another important factor which should be considered as a framework for employability is demographic change (See Figure 1.)

Analysing the old age dependency ratios, it becomes obvious that in 2008 there are almost four persons of working age, i.e., 15-64 years old, for every person aged 65 or over. In 2060, the ratio is expected to be almost two to one.

Taking into account the total number of population, 495,4 million in 2008, and the forecast, 519,9 million in 2030 and 505,7 million in 2060, the working age population, that is, 15-64 year-olds, is to fall by about 50 million while the population of older than 65 will increase by more than 60 million. Thus, loud and clear from the numbers that the provision of LLG services and their quality will play at least the role of double importance, taking

into consideration that the state of they are in today is sufficient. However, the picture painted for the present situation may not be altogether true concerning LLG provision as the figures appear to vary hugely from one country to the other, and quite a few policy makers seem to disregard the problem.

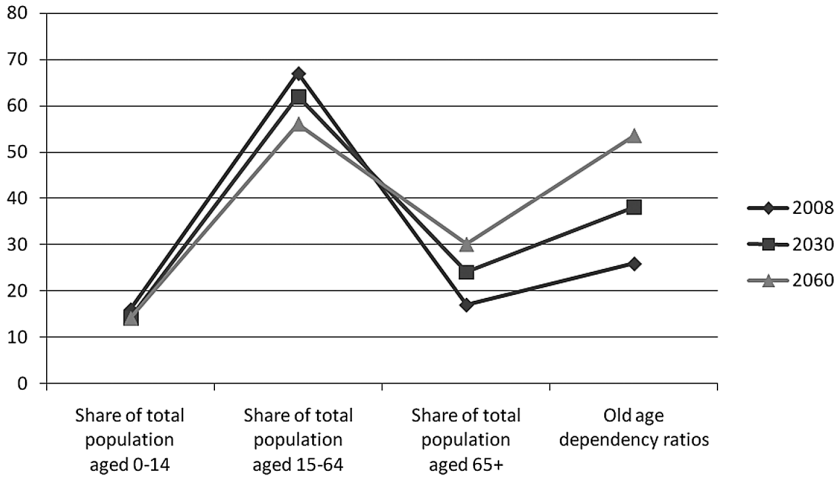


Fig. 1. Demographic change in EU 27 (in %). *Source:* EUROSTAT population statistics.

The core indicator for measuring progress in the field of employability is the share of population with high educational attainment. It presents the educational characteristics of the supply side of the labour market, that is, the proportion of highly skilled workers in the labour force, which plays an important role in relation to economic growth.

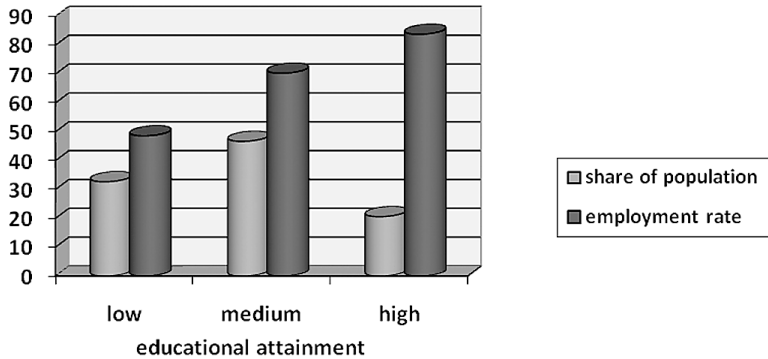


Fig. 2. Educational attainment and employment rate in 2007 (EU-27, 15-64-year-olds). Source: EUROSTAT (LFS).

The Council Conclusion of May 2007 adopted the educational attainment of the population as one of sixteen core indicators for measuring progress on education and training systems. The Commission emphasized the central indicator for monitoring progress towards the knowledge-based economy as the share of the population with high educational attainment. The situation in the year 2007 is shown in Figure 2. below.

From Figure 2, it can be seen that the employment rate grows linearly depending on the educational attainment: the higher the educational attainment, the higher the employment rate. This regularity does not mirror the share of population: higher levels of educational attainment relates to the smallest proportion of population, while the biggest corresponds to medium-level educational attainment.

The main characteristic of educational attainment of the population in Member States is that young people with higher levels of formal educational qualifications enter the labour force, while older generations with lower levels gradually leave. This generational effect becomes more visible year by year.

Another interesting aspect of the educational attainment level of the population is the corresponding performance in the labour market. The overall tendency is made clearly visible in Figure 3 below, where a clear tendency can be observed: the higher the educational attainment, the higher the employment rates are across European countries.

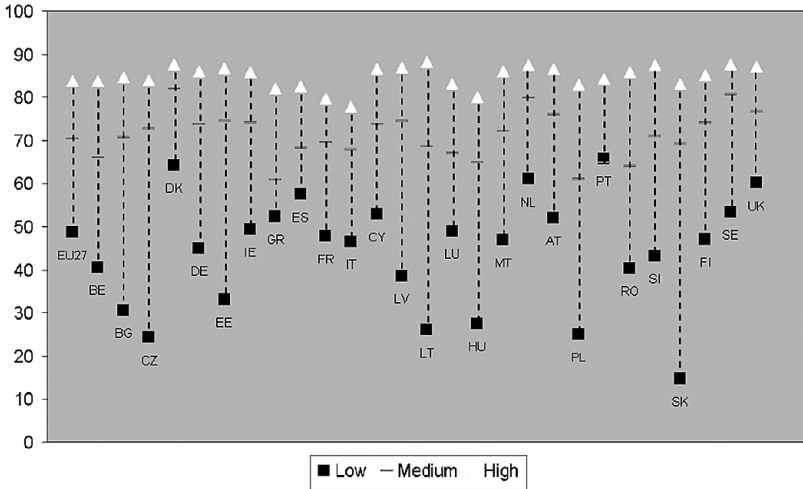


Fig. 3. Percentage of employment rates (vertical axis) and educational attainment (low, medium, high) in different Member States for 15-64-year-olds in 2007. Source: EUROSTAT, New Cronos database.

Figure 3. only illustrates labour market demand in relationship to people with different educational attainment levels. It does neither consider the rules of and institutions in the national, regional and local labour markets, nor the overall labour market situation, which also impacts on the performance of workers with different educational attainment levels. What is more important, it does not mirror the quality of LLG services, which has significant impact both on the educational attainment and on the employment rates.

The demand for higher competences is expected to be rising continuously in most occupations, including uncomplicated elementary jobs, due to the ongoing growth of the service sector and sweeping technological and organisational changes.

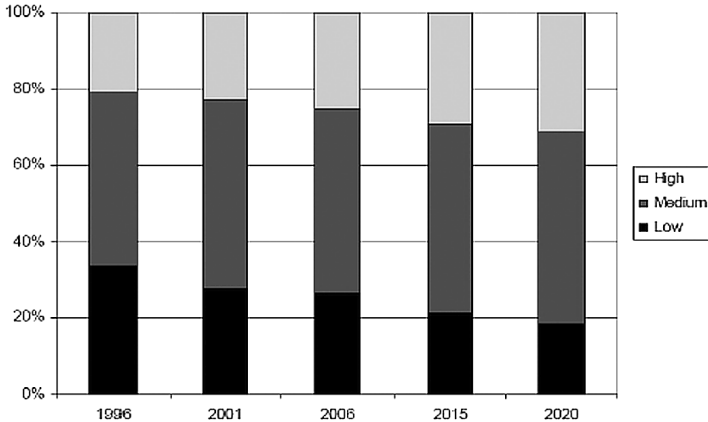


Fig. 4. Employment shares by education attainment level in the years 1996-2020. Source: Cedefop (2008), EU27.

Based on projections made by Cedefop, in 2015, high qualifications will be needed in approximately 30% of all jobs, whereas almost 50% will require medium-level qualifications, including vocational qualifications. Jobs requiring only low level qualifications will have decreased from over 30% in 1996 to around 20% of the working age population in 2015 (See Figure 4.). It is expected that this will increase the pressure on the upper and post-secondary levels of education to improve the quality and access to their LLG service provision in the broad sense that means including dropouts and graduates.

As mentioned above, progression in educational attainment of the population and increases in employment rates require the development of lifelong guidance systems in the Member States in order that they can face up to the future challenges of

demographic change and productivity growth. One important approach for doing this is to develop National Fora for Lifelong Guidance Policy, and, incidentally, to reach this aim, all international initiatives, especially those supported by EC funding are very welcome. One of them, of high importance for the development of LLG service provisions across the Europe, would appear to be the EUROPLACEMENT project.

LLG AND 2020 BENCHMARKS

Table 1. The 5 benchmarks to be achieved by 2010 and by 2020.

<i>Benchmarks to be achieved by 2010</i>	<i>Benchmarks to be achieved by 2020</i>
	At least 95% of children from the age of 4 and the age for starting compulsory primary education should be participating in early childhood education.
No more than 10% early school leavers.	The proportion of early leavers from education and training should be less than 10%.
Decrease of at least 20% in the percentage of low-achieving pupils in reading literacy.	
	The proportion of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science should be less than 15%.
At least 85% of young people should have completed upper secondary education.	
Increase of at least 15% in the number of tertiary graduates in MST, with a simultaneous decrease in the gender imbalance.	
	The share of 30-34-year-olds with tertiary educational attainment should be at least 40%;
At least 12.5% of the adult population should participate in lifelong learning.	An average of at least 15% of adults should participate in lifelong learning.

In May 2007, the Council introduced in Conclusions (2007) a clear arrangement of 16 core indicators for monitoring progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training. They are seen as a vital measure for monitoring the progress made by Member States in the area of guidance in their lifelong learning strategies. They also play an important role as a key tool for assessing the implementation of the goals set in the Lisbon Strategy.

In order to guide progress on the Education and Training 2010 Work Programme, the Council introduced an indicator for tertiary graduates in Mathematics, Science and Technology (MST) and, in May 2003, adopted five benchmarks to be achieved by 2010, and in May 2009, five benchmarks for 2020 (See Table 1.).

The Table 1. shows that the benchmarks 2020 are new with two exceptions. The first is the benchmark *The share of early leavers from education and training should be less than 10%*, which is gradually stronger condition in comparison to the one for 2010 *No more than 10% early school leavers*. The benchmark was totally not reached till 2010.

The situation regarding the above for all EU27 countries is presented in Figure 5 below.

The benchmark for 2010/20 was reached by only seven Member States, HR, LT, PL, CZ, SL, SK, FI, and almost by AT, already in the year 2010 (See Figure 5.). It is also possible to consider this fact by taking into account the countries that have already received the proscribed level of progress and performance exceeding the average of the five European benchmarks for 2010. These are PL, UK, DK, FI, IE, IS, NO, SE and SL. The 18 other countries have not yet reached the average of the five benchmarks for 2010.

The second exception is the percentage of the adult population which should participate in lifelong learning (See Table 1.). The benchmark 2020 deals with a higher average, which means

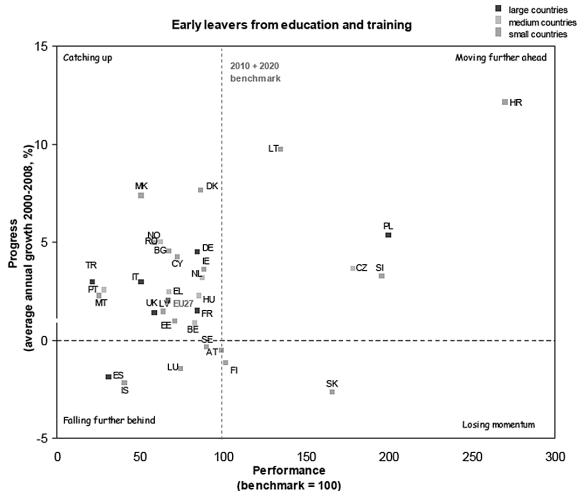


Fig. 5. Early school leavers. Percentage of those aged 18-24 with less than upper secondary education and not in education or training. Source: European Commission DG JRC/Crell.

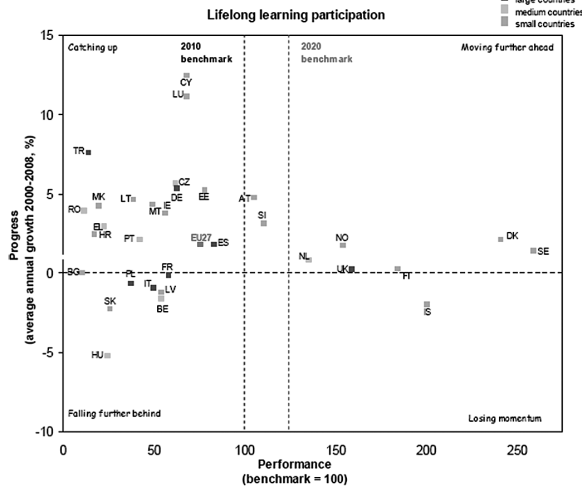


Fig. 6. The percentage of the adult population which should participate in life-long learning. Source: European Commission DG JRC/Crell.

a progress of 2.5% in comparison to the benchmark of 2010 (See Figure 6).

The performance and progress made by each country from 2000 until 2008, as average for the EU27, in each of the five benchmark areas are shown in Figure 7 below. It is clear that the EU27 average indicates that only in one benchmark, the one for MST graduates, progress and performance has been good and the benchmark for 2010 reached. In contrast, a very bad situation is illustrated by one benchmark, i.e., the one concerning low achievers in reading, where the EU27 average shows a tendency of falling further behind. Concerning the other three benchmarks, the situation is fairly good: the average for EU27 shows that progress has been made, the results not falling too far from the benchmark for 2010.

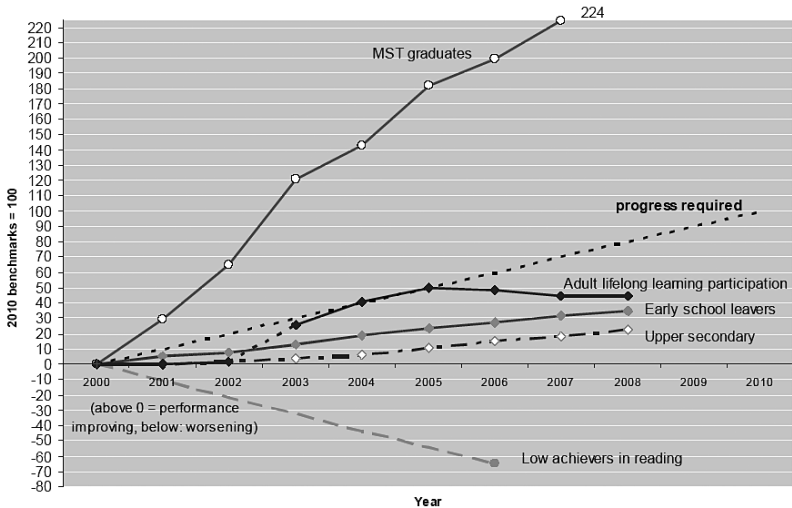


Fig. 7. Progress 2000 – 2008 towards meeting the five benchmarks for 2010 (EU averages). Source: European Commission DG Education and Culture.

Figure 8. below presents the five benchmarks for 2020 as hitherto performance and progress of the EU27.

From, the figure, certain trends towards reaching benchmarks for 2020 can be observed. Two of them, *Pre-primary education* and *Tertiary attainment*, exceed the required level of progress, and it would be good to maintain the situation for the next 10 years. Two others, *Early school leavers* and *Adult lifelong learning*, are at present below the required level of progress. However, hopefully, progress can be made within the next 10 years. The worst situation is with the benchmark *Low achievers in reading*, where the EU27 average is falling steeply (See Figure 8.), which sets a great challenge for primary and secondary schools. There is some hope, though, of *Pre-primary education* perhaps being able to change the situation.

In conclusion, it is obvious that, to a great extent, reaching the 2020 benchmarks depends on the position of lifelong guidance in the strategy of LLL set by each Member State and the quality

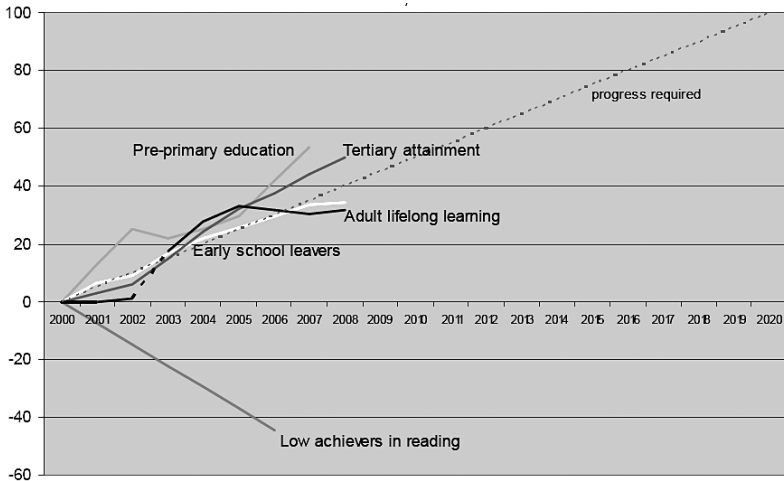


Fig. 8. Progress 2000–2008 towards meeting the five benchmarks for 2020 (EU averages). Source: European Commission DG Education and Culture.

of service provided. In other words, to a great extent, reaching the Lisbon goals is dependent on the creation and development of high quality career guidance services with open access to citizens of any age and in any life role, with special respect given to the transition of youth to the labour market.

Explicit lifelong learning strategies have been adopted by the majority of countries and the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is entering a crucial phase. Most Member States are making significant progress in developing frameworks for national qualifications and in linking to a broader use of learning outcomes in order to define and describe qualifications and the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Measures have also been taken to further develop lifelong guidance systems for adults and also to help young people complete their education and training and make successful transition to the labour market.

In a rapidly changing world, lifelong learning is essential to the development of today's knowledge-based society and economy and the key to employment and economic success. The EU strategy emphasizes countries working together and learning from each other, principally developing lifelong guidance systems as an implementation tool for lifelong learning strategy.

Therefore, the priority of the Member States is given to strengthening policies, systems and practices in lifelong guidance in Europe so as to create a suitable institutional environment and adequate systemic devices for converging strategies towards building national and regional lifelong guidance systems (Cedefop, 2008a). The basic role is to support and develop the national LLG fora, which are independent and apolitical organizations across sectors, with high levels of equity, efficiency and quality. These NLLGP are often created as a bottom-up movement of LLG professionals and should be strongly supported by regional governments and relevant ministries. In this context, improved cooperation such as EUROPLACEMENT and cross-

sectoral and multiprofessional initiatives, increased dialogue and stronger partnerships among all key players and stakeholders in the frame of national fora will help lifelong guidance become a reality in the Member States.

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Milena Ruffino*

*Valorisation and transferability
of graduates' competences
in the processes of guidance*

ABSTRACT

Recent economic and cultural changes have complicated the transition from university to the labour market, which highlights a renewed need for undergraduates' and postgraduates' orientation and guidance. In this paper we shall try to reflect on the practices of university guidance and on how it is possible to promote the transferability of non-formal and informal learning for graduates, which is useful for employment purposes.

KEYWORDS: education and inequality, labour market transition

INTRODUCTION

The new socio-economic and cultural changes generated by the strategic role assumed by knowledge have helped to change the process of transition from university to the labour market, thus making it more complex and less linear. The current debate on improving the transition process is characterized by the importance given to the creation of partnerships and networks in-

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volving the university, the employment market, and enterprises, as well as by the recognition of the important role played by 'intermediary institutions' in the containment of risk of disorientation and loss of sense, which may afflict modern man (Berger and Luckmann 2010).

In particular, studies show that graduates' transition from university to the labour market could be promoted by means of valorising all experiences of formal, non-formal, informal learning (EC 2000, 2001), combining and integrating them (Colardyn and Bjornavold 2004), constructing systems for the recognition and validation of experiential learning (CEDEFOP 2008; Colardyn and Bjornavold 2004), and the graduates' own ability to use and transfer their resources from one context to another.

As far as the first aspect, the valorisation of all forms of learning, is concerned, starting from the publication of the *A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* (2001), the different European countries have shared the objective of promoting the development of a learning society through the valorisation of people's knowledge and competences, as well as through the diffusion of a learning culture. The possibility of exercising an active citizenship, personal self-realisation, and social inclusion as well as more high levels of employment rely on this objective. The innovation emerging from this report is the will to value both knowledge and competences learned in traditional contexts and those acquired in non-formal and informal contexts (e.g. competences developed in the work environment, during activities of associations, charity work and free time)¹. In fact, it is believed that

¹ The *A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* distinguishes between three basic categories of purposeful learning activity. The first, «Formal learning», takes place in education and training institutions, leading to recognized diplomas and qualifications. The second, «Non-formal learning», takes place alongside the mainstream systems of education and training and does not typically lead to formalized certificates. Non-formal learning may be provided in the workplace and through the activities of civil society organisations and

the objective of promoting a knowledge-based society in Europe requires a special focus on the relationship between the different forms of learning and the modalities of interconnection between the different contexts in which the objects of learning are known, acquired and diffused (EC 2000).

Even today, Europe is engaged in the search for a shared system of recognition and validation of acquisitions obtained in contexts different from the formal ones¹. Such practices are considered as key devices for a European strategy of lifelong learning. These devices can function as tools for people's empowerment, since their employment makes it possible to transfer knowledge and competences from one context to the other, according to the criterion of transparency (Cedefop 2008) and combine and integrate formal, non-formal, and informal learning (Colardyn and Bjornavold 2004).

Devices for recognition and validation are based on a new epistemological conception starting from which it has been possible to free "practice" from the traditional subordination of "theory", and thus restore value to all forms of experiential learning (Schon 1987). Experience is formative only if, through it, people acquire the capacity of observing and conferring mean-

groups (such as youth organisations, trades unions and political parties). It can also be provided through organizations or services that have been set up to complement formal systems (such as arts, music and sports classes or private tutoring to prepare for examinations). The third, «Informal learning», is a natural accompaniment to everyday life. Unlike formal and non-formal learning, informal learning is not necessarily intentional learning, and so may well not be recognized even by individuals themselves as contributing to their knowledge and skills, EC, *A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*, Brussels 30 October 2000, SEC(2000) 1832.

¹ Practices of recognition and validation of experiential learning can usually be explained through two methodological frameworks. Firstly, through VAE – *Reconnaissance et Validation des Acquis Expérientiels*, which originated in France and, generally, in the French-speaking area; secondly, through APEL – *Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning*, which was developed in Britain.

ing to themselves, the others and the world (Dewey 1938); also, it is the expression of the interaction between action, “reflection”, “transformation”, and “creation” (Kolb 1984; Schon 1987; Mezirow 1991; Novak 1998) and it is transformed into “meaningful learning”, that is, into a form of learning with a high level of transferability (Novak 1998).

The explication and recognition of contextual, tacit and/or unaware knowledge and competences requires the activation of metacognitive educational strategies that allow the subject to identify and analyze cases of experiential learning. In fact, it is only by starting from the analysis of experience that the subjects can acquire awareness of the resources at their disposal and, subsequently, develop the ability to employ such resources into other contexts, such as working environments.

Although recognition and certification systems contribute to creating visible knowledge and competences acquired in non-formal and informal experiential contexts, it is only by starting from the awareness of the person who possesses and uses such acquisitions that the processes of their transferability can be favoured. In other words, for graduates and undergraduates, acquiring awareness of their *non-formal* and *informal learning* implies the possibility to value such forms of knowledge and to create the premises for transferability. Therefore, we should try to understand how it is possible to provide graduates with the capacity to gain awareness of the resources acquired beyond formal contexts and of the ways in which such resources can be transferred in other contexts in order to favour more possibilities for *employment*, *self-efficacy* and *self-awareness*.

THE DIMENSION OF TRANSFERABILITY OF GUIDANCE PROCESSES

The capacity to transfer and employ knowledge and competences in an efficacious and flexible way, regardless of the con-

text in which they have been acquired, is often referred to as «transferability», This concept is employed in the humanities in order to single out «the factor through which it is possible to solve and explain challenges, tasks and duties that yield to problems concerning restructuring and unifying reconsideration of those things that usually are perceived and treated as epistemologically, functionally, organizationally and operationally different and separated» (Corradini 2003, 17).

To employ knowledge and competences learned in a specific context to solve problems and carry out tasks proper in another context is not an automatic and/or spontaneous procedure. Transferability is a meta-competence and, as such, consists of a subject's capacity to know the resources at his/her disposal, to individuate some of the common elements between two or more situations/objects/problems (acknowledgment of an analogy/identity of structure), to become aware of the similarities among different situations, problems and tasks, and, finally, to understand that knowledge and competences employed in a certain situation can also be used in another (Rey 2003). Therefore, unlike experts, able to recognize the identity of structure among different situations, students and young graduates are rarely able to do that.

There are two necessary conditions for a young graduate to be able to implement the transfer of knowledge, competences, and ability: firstly, he must be aware of the resources s/he possesses; and, secondly, s/he must be able to recognize an isomorphism between two, or more, different situations/experiences, for example, to distinguish between a task at work and an action taken during her/his free time. To wit, as stressed by Bernard Rey, the difficulty experienced by the young graduate attempting to transfer her/his resources lies in his/her lack of experience in recognizing analogous situations. The individuation of an analogy between two different structures depends on the heterogeneous "meaning" attributed to them, as describe by Da-

vid P. Ausubel and by Joseph D. Novak through the concept of “meaningful learning”, that is, the inclusive process of thought, feeling, and action from which the possibility of people to construe and produce new knowledge derives (Novak 1998).

Nonetheless, it is not sufficient to recognize an identity of structure between two problems (or tasks), of which one must be solved (or carried out) in order to transfer and, thus, to use again a knowledge/competence/procedure that has proved to be successful in the past. Since it is not an automatic process, transfer occurs only in the moment in which the subject is informed on the fact that the first problem can help him/her solve the second. In this respect, Bernard Rey states that: «The objective similarity that constitutes transferability is itself an object to be known as other objects are» (Rey 2003, 184). This means that transferability, as well as the capacity to use in an integrated fashion things acquired in formal, non-formal, and informal contexts, presupposes the arrangement of learning and guidance activities. These activities should be specifically addressed to the individuation of analogies among different problems and to the formation of the awareness concerning the fact that the actions are directed by the meanings attributed to the situations. In fact, it is the meaning attributed to situations that, by influencing intentions and actions, determines the will of a person to use or not use his/her resources and, thus, to implement transfer processes (Rey, 2003).

Thereby, a necessary condition for *transfer* to occur is that the meaning attributed to the situation must be coherent, for the relevant person, with the possibility to employ it. In the process of *guidance* such a meaning is often biased by the personal projects of each individual. It is the project that drives the young graduate to single out coherence, that is, an analogy of structure between two situations, and to frame the situation in a specific way. In this respect, transferability, that is, the analogy established between many situations, depends on the meaning at-

tributed to the situation and, therefore, to the professional and personal project of each individual young graduate.

On basis of what has been said so far, *lifelong guidance*, able to improve the transition from university to the labour market, should allow the development of graduates' and undergraduates' meta-cognitive and project-building competences², which are considered, among other things, the necessary basis for the self-orienting capacity of an individual. Such capacities can be promoted and fostered by the processes of university guidance that makes use of *bridging* practice and the *bilan de compétences*.

Bridging consists of allowing undergraduate students to single out situations in which it is possible to apply cognitive capacities, knowledge, expertise, and procedures acquired during non-formal and informal learning. In fact, it is only by recognizing these operations that they will be able to individuate analogies of structure and to imagine and prefigure the employment of such resources in different contexts (Rey 2003).

At the same time, the *bilan de compétences*, a method of analysis and aided self-analysis of competences addressed to the definition of a personal and professional project, allows the young graduate to foster her/his capacity to set objectives, to make conscious and responsible choices, and to prefigure and project her/his own future (Lévy Leboyer 1993).

Thereby, the valorisation of knowledge and competences does not merely consist of formal validation and certification, but also the result of the integrated reconsideration of a subject's resources in the light of its responsible employment in other contexts.

Therefore, if they are adapted to university guidance as practiced within the offices designed to this purpose, metacognitive

² In general terms, the metacognitive capacity is the ability of subjects to investigate their cognitive processes. In fact, if a person is aware of what it does and how its mind works, then it is able to succeed in running activities.

practise and the *bilan de compétences* may enhance graduates' transferability capacity and to allow for the *employment, self-efficacy, and self-awareness*.

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Career Guidance and Counselling for Mobilities

ABSTRACT

In its first part, the article provides a basic overview on guidance and counselling for mobility issues at universities, focusing on the possibilities and role of guidance and counselling for both sent and received mobility participants. Recommendations by the EU institutions and by the European Forum for Student Guidance (FEDORA) are also briefly discussed. The second part of the article is based on an interview and a survey of mobility participants. It illustrates their perception of intercultural competences determining the quality and effectiveness of mobility stays. The final part of the article offers implications and ideas to improve quality of guidance and counselling, and multicultural counselling for mobility participants in particular.

KEYWORDS: mobility, university guidance, counselling, sent/ received participant, intercultural counselling, intercultural competences, improving quality of mobilities

INTRODUCTION

The universities' tasks arising from the Council Resolution on modernising universities for Europe's competitiveness in a

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global knowledge economy (Council Resolution 2007) are not small: challenges related to globalization require opening the European higher education and research space to the world. In accordance with that, there is demand for increasing the mobility of university students, researchers and education staff. The Resolution asks the member states to support internalization of HE institutions also through enhancing mobilities. For that purpose, they should adopt measures to broaden the social aspect of HE by means of improving support for students and researchers in the EU and by providing information and guidance related to studies, mobility and career opportunities. The services listed above are part of career information, guidance and counselling services.

In case of guidance for sent and/ or hosted participants in mobilities, multicultural (intercultural) guidance and counselling can be applied.

LIFELONG CAREER GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

Definition: Career¹ guidance refers to services and activities intended to assist individuals of any age and at any point throughout their lives to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers (Sultana, Watts, 2004). (Information, guidance and counselling services – here simplified as „career guidance services“ (Fretwell, David, Watts, 2004).

In contrast with the traditional educational and vocational guidance, career guidance emphasizes personal integrity – the

¹ Professional terminology includes also terms *vocational* and *prevocational* guidance. *Pre-vocational* refers to issues concerning the vocational and training phases – before entering the world of work. *Vocational* refers to lifelong support related to work, employment, job, vocation and labour. The term post-vocational is sometimes used in reference to the issues in retirement age. [4].

holistic approach – and, through recognizing coherence between the spheres, it crosses the borders between educational, vocational and personal guidance (so-called Guidance Triangle). The focus in education is on developing individuals' skills for making life, educational and vocational choices and managing their own careers see: Sultana, Watts. 2004), (Fretwell, Watts, 2004), (Koščo, 1980) (Memorandum on Lifelong Learning 2000), (Sultana, 2004), (Resolution 2008).

Provided services: * career information (in printed, electronic and/ or other forms), * assessment (including psychological diagnostics) and self-assessment tools, * guidance and counselling interviews, * career education and career development programmes (focused on self-awareness, perception of opportunities and developing career management competences – skills for job seeking, presentation skills, competences for making decisions etc.), * job-seeking and job-placement programmes, * services for transition periods, * accreditation of prior and experiential learning (APEL), * mentoring, facilitation etc. (Sultana, Watts, 2004).

Forms of guidance provision: 1/ face-to-face: individually as well as in a group/ collective form; 2/ distance, using ICT: on-line and/ or off-line (e-mail, chat, phone and web-based services) (Sultana, Watts, 2004). Using ICT is particularly effective in information and guidance services. In case of mobilities, ICT tools might be used for information on practicalities (e.g. accommodation, catering, health insurance, life in destination country) and educational guidance.

Guidance practitioners: 1/ first– line practitioners – all educational staff, 2/ second– line practitioners – educational staff with special training (e.g. tutors, coordinators), 3/ third– line practitioners – guidance professionals (guidance psychologists – guidance practitioners) (Watts, Esbroeck, 1998). There are several vocational typologies available in guidance centres, including descriptions of required competences for job positions. Peer

guidance, provided by (trained) peers, has proved effective, too. In regard to mobilities, peer guidance could be provided mainly by mobility ex-participants.

Services according to level of support (provided internally and/ or externally): 1/ guidance² (information-guidance services) – in case a client lacks information for taking a decision, 2/ (psychological) counselling – if a client has problems to take a decision and he needs to clarify his objectives, solve an internal conflict, dilemma and/ or develop his life competences and soft skills, i.e. key competences (in the context of mobilities these might be intercultural competences), 3/ psychotherapy – in case of behaviour and/ or personality disorders or in case of personal crisis (Wiegersma, 1976).

Current trends include (Sultana, 2007) a shift towards * legal entitlement of guidance services; * focus on EU wide free mobility; * lifelong provision (not only in the key transit periods); * educative framework – focus on career management skills, career decision competences; * targeting groups rather than individuals; * self-service provision where appropriate; * accessibility for everybody and ubiquity – services adjusted to diverse client needs, differentiated for specific target groups such as foreign students; * initial and further services provided by guidance counsellors, trained and experienced in counselling across cultures (which raises need of multicultural training not only in relation to mobilities); * quality management and quality assessment, including competence standards for guidance staff.

² Information and guidance refer to support at rather a general level, i.e. guidance as an integrated specific form of social and personal guidance on life pathway. Based on that, there are also more intensive forms of guidance, often referred to as (psychological) counselling. Guidance and counselling are strongly linked levels of support services. [4].

CURRENT TASKS IN MULTICULTURAL GUIDANCE FOR MOBILITIES

Recommendations of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on transnational mobility within the Community for education and training purposes: European Quality Charter for Mobility (Recommendation 2006a), as well as its integral part Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 July 2001 on mobility within the Community for students, persons undergoing training, volunteers, teachers and trainers (Recommendation, 2001) put priority on improving quality of mobilities.

Already in its first point, the Quality Charter addresses information and guidance, and also the later points refer to Multicultural Guidance and Counselling – MGC. In relation to students, it states (Recommendation, 2001) that integration into the education system of the hosting country and re-integration into the system of the sending country needs to be improved through academic guidance for students participating in mobilities. The Charter recommends (Recommendation 2006), that students arriving back home from mobilities are provided guidance for using the skills attained through the mobility stay. If needed, there should also be support available to help them re-integrate into the social, educational and professional environment in the home country. The examples listed above are in relation to the multicultural guidance issues. MGC has all the general characteristics of career counselling, as described above, as well as its own specifics.

Definition: MGC is a situation in which two or more persons with different ways of perceiving their social environments are brought together in a helping relationship (Pedersen, 1994); in other words, MGC refers to preparation and practices that integrate multicultural and culture-specific awareness, knowledge and skills into counselling interaction with individuals of different ethnic and cultural origin. (Arredondo et al., 1996) However,

the term multicultural refers not only to various ethnic groups but also to gender issues, different age groups, disabled people, people with different sexual identity etc. (Launikari, 2006).

Objectives, i.e. success dimensions, include: 1/ psychological adaptation to foreign culture, 2/ developing positive opinions and attitudes towards representatives of the foreign culture and 3/ completing study/ working tasks effectively – intercultural competences are recognized as essential to meeting the objectives (Nový, 1996).

Developing intercultural competences for effective life in a different culture and/ or with foreigners aims at improving: * active language skills * social and communication skills, * competences for coping with stress, * social perception in intercultural communication, * cultural relativity awareness, respect, tolerance and reduction of ethnocentrism, * interest in foreign culture and foreigners, * realistic expectations towards foreign culture, and * knowledge about foreign culture.

Thus, intercultural competence means the ability to achieve the goals listed above (Nový, 1996).

The priority of the competence issue has also been underlined in the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (Recommendation 2006b) and the Council conclusions of 22 May 2008 on Intercultural Competences (Council conclusions, 2008). Social and active citizenship competences are one of eight key competence categories identified in the Reference Framework that is attached to the Recommendation (see above). Intercultural competences are included within the same category together with personal and interpersonal competences.

„The particular competences determine all forms of behaviour that equip individuals to participate in an effective and constructive way in social and working life, and, particularly, in increasingly diverse societies, and to resolve conflict where necessary. Competences are defined here as a combi-

nation of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context“(Recommendation, 2006b).

INFORMATION ON THE SURVEY OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCES

The objective. The aim of the survey was to explore how mobility participants perceived the importance of intercultural competences and how they assessed those of their own. Based on a theoretical model (Morgensternová, Šulová, 2007) the authors researched all the three categories of intercultural competences: cognitive competences (“Software of the Mind”), affective competences (perception of experienced situation) and behavioural competences (e.g. communication skills, teamwork competences, and the competence to solve problems in intercultural setting).

The sample. One hundred students from the Technical University in Kosice TUKE in Slovakia were asked to participate in the survey. All the respondents had been chosen from participants in Erasmus mobility stays in the 2009/2010 academic year. Fifty respondents replied and the answers from 42 of them were processed. These include 20 female students (including 1 PhD student) and 22 male students (also including 1 PhD student). The average age of respondents was 22.9 years.

Survey methodology. The respondents were contacted and asked for cooperation through e-mail. The instruction was to scale (from 1 to 5; 1 meaning „very high“, 2 „rather high“, 3 „average“, 4 „rather low“ and 5 „very low“) 23 particular competences from the following aspects: A/ perceived importance of the competence, B/ self-assessment of their own competence level. Each of the particular competences belongs to one of three categories listed above.

The results. For the purpose of the article, two indicators have been figured out: the frequency of answers in which the respondents A/ considered an intercultural competence of high importance; and B/ assessed the own level of a competence (a competence category or a particular competence) rather low or low.

A) IMPORTANCE OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCES

Table 1. Perceived importance of the competences by competence categories and gender.

Category/Respondents	Male	Female	Total
Cognitive competences	78,24% (2nd place)	74,81% (2nd place)	76,62% (2nd place)
Affective competences	64,28% (3rd place)	69,29% (3rd place)	66,67% (3rd place)
Behavioural competences	85,10% (1st place)	80,52% (1st place)	82,91% (1st place)
Intercultural competences	77,55%	75,86%	76,75%

Note: The percentage refers to a rate of respondents who scaled intercultural competences as of high or very high importance (1+2 on the scale).

Table 1 indicates that three quarters of the respondents consider intercultural competences important, the male respondents slightly more than the female ones.

Of the three categories of intercultural competences, behavioural competences are perceived as the most important (in men's perception, the importance is higher than in that of women), cognitive competences are in the second place (again of higher importance for men), and affective competences in the third place (higher rate in the perception of the women). Nev-

ertheless, the order of the categories appears to be the same for both genders.

Of the particular competences, the following are considered to be the most important: in the 1st place: „respecting others“, 2nd – 3rd: „intercultural openness and tolerance“ and „perception and correct interpretation of conflict situations“, and 4th – 5th: two related competences: „learning a conflict resolution strategy“ and „understanding own role in a team“. Both genders put higher importance on the skill „respecting others“ (men more than women, 1,19: 1,42 on the scale). As for the male participants, in the 2nd place, there is the competence „perception and correct interpretation of conflict situations“, and in the 3th and 4th places „intercultural openness and tolerance“ and „understanding own role in a team“. In the 2nd – 4th places for the female participants, there are the following competences: „intercultural openness and tolerance“, „adaptability“, and „learning a conflict resolution strategy“.

B) LEVEL OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCES

Table 2. Self-assessment of one's own competence level by the competence category and gender.

Category/Respondents	Male	Female	Total
Cognitive competences	4,76% (2nd place)	3,82% (3rd place)	4,32% (3rd place)
Affective competences	10,31% (1st place)	4,39% (2nd place)	7,5% (1st place)
Behavioural competences	7,69% (3rd place)	5,79% (1st place)	6,78% (2nd place)
Intercultural competences	7,48%	4,83%	6,23%

Note: The percentage represents a rate of respondents who scaled the level of their own intercultural competence as rather low or very low (4+5 on the scale).

It is significant that the respondents consider affective competences to be of the lowest importance, while, at the same time, they consider their own affective competences as the least developed. In the second place, there are behavioural and, in the third place, cognitive competences. In total, 6,23% of the respondents assess their intercultural competences as weak, with a significant difference between the male and female respondents (7,48% and 4,83%, respectively), which appears in all the three categories. The order is not the same for both genders: the order for men is affective – cognitive – behavioural competences, while that for the women is behavioural – affective – cognitive. Affective competences have been assessed as weak for 10,31% of the men. The women got above the 5% border only in the self-assessment of behavioural competences.

The lowest levels of particular competences have been self-assessed regarding the following competences: 1. ability „to interpret emotions in another culture“, 2. „empathy for other mentalities and their specifics“, 3. „correct understanding of behaviour, in case of a different culture representative“, 4. „non-verbal communication“ and 5. ability „to interpret foreign behavioural patterns correctly“. The female respondents assessed the following of their competences as the least developed: in the 1st – 2nd places: „non-verbal communication“ and “ability to communicate without misunderstandings in communication“; in the 3rd place: „to interpret foreign behavioural patterns correctly“, and the 4th-5th:“ learning a conflict resolution strategy“ and ability “to interpret emotions in another culture“. The assessments of the male respondents are lower, the lowest figure being for the skills (1. – 2.) „to interpret emotions in another culture“ and „empathy for other mentalities and their specifics“. In the 3rd place there is „gaining knowledge about foreign culture“, in the 4th and 5th „sensitivity towards other culture“ and the competence for „correct understanding of behaviour, in case of a a different culture representative“.

Summary. The survey results indicate that three quarters of the respondents (76,75%) regard intercultural competences as important and only less than two thirds (58,40%) assessing their own competences as good or very good. The competence category they find the least important and, at the same time, the least developed (especially so for men, of whom over 10% find it low), is the category of affective competencies.

In general, the respondents do not consider their particular intercultural competences as very low, but still 7,48% male and 4,83 % female respondents find them rather lowly developed. This indicates that some intercultural (psychosocial) preparation for mobility participants would be definitely suitable.

Intercultural competences, the same as any other competences, can be developed. Training has proved effective in group (as for guidance) or collective (as for information) forms. Suitable alternatives include information-guidance programmes (so-called informative training), which aim at providing relevant information, or psychological-counselling programmes (group counselling and/ or competence training, including intercultural training?) (Zvariková, 2008) Intercultural training is usually divided into the following categories: 1/ culture oriented – focused on improving understanding of typical behaviour patterns in a foreign culture – values, social standards etc., 2/ focused on interaction and communication – direct and structured contact with „culture experts“ from a particular country, including simulations of social and working/study situations, and 3/ so-called intercultural sensitiser (intercultural assimilator) – combination of learning and understanding aspects (Nový, 1996).

CONCLUSION

The European Quality Charter for Mobility (Recommendation, 2006), offers particular recommendations as a reference

tool, with the aim to improve quality of mobilities, thus supporting positive experience of participants both in hosting and sending countries after arrival and back at home. In the Delivering on the modernisation Agenda for Universities: education, research and innovation (Delivering, 2010) it is stated that the rate of students that have studied or had a practical experience placement in industries abroad for at least one trimester or a semester should increase to double at least. All forms of mobility should be recognized as a determinant that enriches study at all levels (including vocational training for doctoral research) and as a positive determinant in career progress of university researchers and staff.

The European Community Green Paper Promoting the learning mobility of young people (Green Paper, 2009) concludes that not all young people understand the benefits of study mobility and also its contribution to personal development and personal employability. The paper identifies a lack of language competences and intercultural knowledge, the same as resistance to leave „home“ (Is this due to the fear of the unknown? Lack of life skills and practical skills?...) as potential barriers. Nevertheless, foreign language skills and intercultural competences widen an individual's professional options, upgrade the skills of the European workforce and are essential elements of genuine European identity.

Multicultural guidance and counselling can contribute to increasing the quality of mobilities by means of individual and group guidance and counselling for arriving foreign students and those leaving. The services could be focused on studies, vocation/ career, personal problems and crises, and should take into consideration knowledge about the hosting country and its cultural specifics (Delivering, 2010) . Augmentative counselling can be fully implemented if also cultural (psychosocial) training is provided beside the language training and guidance on practicalities. Group forms such as intercultural training and

programmes might be provided, and, if needed or on demand, also face-to-face counselling.

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Validation of non formal and informal learning

ABSTRACT

The article gives a brief overview about the concept of life long learning in the European Union with a focus on informal and non formal learning. Amongst others a clear definition of skills, qualifications and competencies is presented. Secondly we discuss how to identify main areas of informal and non formal learning by the means of time use and task analyses in order to validate informal and non formal learning. Thirdly we describe the situation in regard of validation of informal and non formal learning in Europe whereas the emphasis is put on the partner countries of the Europlacement project. Furthermore some useful theories to guide the development of tools are being presented. And finally we discuss some methodological approaches to the validation of informal and non formal learning processes. A comprehensive bibliography and link list completes the article.

KEYWORDS: lifelong learning in Europe, time use, task analysis, informal and non formal learning, validation, skills, qualifications, competencies, theories

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LIFE-LONG LEARNING WITH FOCUS ON INFORMAL
AND NON-FORMAL LEARNING

In recent years, the concepts of informal and non-formal learning have grown in importance and research into them is becoming more commonplace. In 2002, the European Union developed and emplaced policies on life-long learning, and one of the main foci was based around the need to identify, assess and certificate informal learning (Bjornavold, 2000). Both academics and policy makers alike see recognising and accrediting informal learning as an opportunity to substantially widen participation in learning with all the positive connotations this can have both at the societal and the individual level.

The Council (June 2002) underlined the key role played by the validation of non-formal and informal learning and called for the development of ways to validate this experience. The Copenhagen Declaration (Nov 2002) and Council Resolution (Dec 2002) stated that there was a need "to develop a set of common principles for validation of non-formal and informal learning with the aim of ensuring greater comparability between approaches in different countries and at different levels". The Council and Commission Joint Interim Report (26 February 2004) states "that the development of references and principles can usefully support national policies". The most important elements that followed the Copenhagen Declaration are the development of a single framework for transparency, the development of a European credit transfer system for VET, as well as common reference levels for VET, and common principles for certification, further the development of common principles for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, and, finally, increased support for the development of qualifications and competences at sectoral level (see also Balduini et al, no year, pp4).

The European Council and the representatives of Governments of Member States recognise that the identification of non-

formal and informal learning ‘meet the specific needs of those individuals who seek integration or re-integration into education and training, the labour market and society’ (The council on Common European Principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning, May 2004).

INFORMAL AND NON-FORMAL LEARNING – DEFINITION

There exist many varying definitions of formal, informal and non-formal learning throughout the existing literature. The European Commission (2001) give the following clear and accurate definition of formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Formal Learning: learning typically provided by an education or training institution, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and leading to certification. Formal learning is intentional from the learner’s perspective.

Non-formal Learning: learning that is not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. It is, however, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner’s perspective.

Informal Learning: learning resulting from daily life activities relating to work, family life or leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and, typically, does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but, in most cases, it is unintentional or incidental.

INFORMAL AND NON-FORMAL LEARNING IN EVERYDAY SETTINGS

The phrase “we live and learn” lends itself well to informal and non-formal learning. Humans beings are social by nature, and learning is a natural byproduct of living. Learning is not

confined to explicit learning situations. People who are lacking in explicit education may wrongly feel that they do not know much at all. However, learning is omni-present. A central feature of informal and incidental learning is learning from and through life experience. Fundamentally, experiential learning means the learning we acquire through experience.

Informal Learning takes place also in the community. It is difficult to estimate the exact amount of informal learning that is undertaken in a community because of its scale and diversity and because it is often both a part and a product of ostensibly non-educational activities. (McGivney, 2004). Another concept very closely related to informal learning is viewing it simply as implicit learning or tacit knowledge. The first person to make note of the construct was the great Social Scientist Michael Polanyi (1967) in his profound book "The Tacit Dimension", in which he refers to tacit knowledge as 'that which we know [about] but cannot tell [much about it]' and believed that "we all know more than we can tell".

Validating informal learning involves making implicit learning or knowledge explicit. The reverse is also true: explicit learning can lead to tacit knowledge. This brings on the argument as to whether any knowledge is totally explicit or implicit. Most knowledge is composed of both elements to a greater or lesser extent. The Europlacement project is interested in also utilising, or harnessing, tacit knowledge for constructive purposes, i.e., aiming to bring it to conscious awareness in order to channel it into a career path for the graduates seeking for a job.

FROM COMMON EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES TO COMPETENCIES

As learning happens in everyday contexts as part of daily life both during work and leisure time, an analysis of time usage is helpful to identify main areas where learning takes place in

order to validate informal and non-formal learning. For an LdV project called INFORM (IRL/06/B/F/PP-153101), a tool was developed to identify hidden strengths from common tasks that people do everyday and to see how these strengths are transferable to the labour market. The first step in developing the INFORM tool was to research how people in Europe spend their time. After the initial research, a qualitative study was conducted to find the most common everyday activities across the target population. Finally, research was carried out to find a broad range of competence components that each common activity could be rated against. The final list of such components totalled 123 individual elements and included the following categories: Cognitive Strengths, Physical Strengths, Emotional Strengths, Interests, Personality and Work Styles (for further information, see the report *Validation of informal and non formal learning*, 2010, pp12).

VALIDATION OF INFORMAL AND NON FORMAL LEARNING

“Validation of non-formal and informal learning is increasingly seen as a key to realise lifelong and life-wide learning. A growing number of European countries (2) emphasise the importance of making visible and giving appropriate value to learning taking place outside formal education and training institutions, for example, at work, in leisure time activities and at home.” (Cedefop, 2008, p 5). (See also Balduini et al, no year, pp 4.

1. Validation of informal and non-formal learning in Europe (as of in 2007)
 - A reality – i.e. policy statements; tangible practices; general acceptance; legal structures; all sectors; good take-up (Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Romania, Spain, UK)

- Emergent – i.e. not systemic; legal and/or policy framework (not both); implementation commencing; pilot stage; take-up variable across sectors (Austria, Czech Rep, Iceland, Italy, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Sweden)
- Low level of activity – i.e. VINFL sometimes controversial; little policy or practice; driven by EU agenda and NQFs (Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Latvia, Lichtenstein, Slovak Rep, Turkey)
- Patterns of developments: UKà Ireland; Franceà Belgium; Finlandà Norway, Denmark & Sweden; new Member States seeking coherence with older members
- (Harris 2009).
- For further information, see also <http://www.ecotec.com/europeaninventory/2007.html> (European Inventory on Validation of non-formal and informal learning ©ECOTEC Research & Consulting Limited, Birmingham).

2. Tools for studying informal and non-formal learning

The existing literature points to two general approaches for the analysis of potential:

- Methods using self-assessment and -opinion
- Methods using external-assessment and -opinion

Within both of the above approaches, there are a variety of methods:

Method for self- and external analysis – Portfolio Analysis

The concept of the portfolio originates from the French-speaking part of Canada, and arose following the Second World War. At the time, tests were conducted with the idea that they should be suitably developed to identify civilians, especially women, with acquired abilities useful for the civilian labour market. The portfolio is a structured collection of all personal data, facts, and career documents pertaining to personal potential and profile. Thus, formal and extracurricular acquired competence should

be documented and accentuated. It is possible that institutionally unrecognised life experiences are not documented, and, subject to these, development of an equivalent method institutionally is important.

Instruments for External analysis

Instruments pertaining to the Europlacement topic, especially for external analysis:

- Assessment-Centre
- Tests
- Suitable interviews

Assessment-Centre. The literature compares in particular the portfolio as an instrument of self-analysis and the assessment-centre as an instrument of external-analysis. In assessment, people's competences are registered using a number of complex tasks. Several persons act as observers, tracking the behaviour of the participants, finally bringing together their single observations.

Tests. The literature especially distinguishes between the following types of tests to ascertain potential:

- Ability tests
 - Performance tests
 - Observation at work or simulations
 - Personality tests
 - Interest tests
 - Traditional tests or examinations
- (Schmidt, p. 38)

Interviews. An interesting extension to the field of External Analysis is offered by the "Multi-modal Interview" method by Schuler (1992); at an essentially minor expense, one can achieve similar results with these methods in the assessment-centre

(with equivalent validity values). A Multi-modal Interview (duration: approx. 30 minutes) consists of the following eight steps (here described for choosing an external applicant for specific employment):

Mixture of methods to solve the integrated, individually-centred assessment

In the literature, it is unanimously agreed that instruments for self- and external-analysis mutually complement one another. For example, while assessment methods, interviews and tests are primarily heteronymous, the portfolio is especially suitable for self-evaluations, and here it is important to recognise and bring in informal study experiences. On the other hand, some tests stand out particularly due to their inherent high degree of validity, and multi-modal interviews are used as a substitute for expensive Assessments.

The Europlacement Tool Kit

The main aim of the Europlacement Project is to promote the transfer of a kit of products enabling graduates to enter the labour market. The transfer concerns a kit of tools produced by the same partners in previous projects. The Europlacement project is to experiment and adapt these tools, with the aim to propose an integrated system of good practices certifying non-formal and informal learning outcomes, supporting LLG, favouring employability, and reducing information asymmetry between labour demand and supply.

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*(e)Portofolio as a job-seeking tool
for universities*

ABSTRACT

This article outlines the potential and relevance of ePortfolio as a tool for enhancing competence recognition and, in doing so, highlights the potential of ePortfolio to function as an effective support application that facilitates the transition from university career to job placement.

The portfolio's various definitions and different aims provide the reader with an overall rationale within which the specificities of its applications for job hunting are embedded. Moreover, several existing practices, initiatives and experiences on the portfolio's adoption and usage within university settings in Europe and beyond are collated and analysed. Also, relevant aspects to the overall picture are brought along by technological development and stakeholders' perspectives. Finally, the discussion focuses on the implications of and challenges to the portfolio's successful integration within the university sector.

KEYWORDS: ePortfolio, digital assets, evidence, job placement, career development

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WHAT IS A PORTFOLIO? NUMEROUS DEFINITIONS CENTRED ON COMMON FEATURES

Key issues and discussion topics related to the potential merits and uses of “Portfolio”, “WebPortfolio” and “ePortfolio” have been the subject of numerous debates and conferences, and these closely related areas represent the focus of much ongoing research and project development within the education and training sectors worldwide. Even more precisely, the concept of portfolio has long been employed within the art/fashion and financial sectors, and the term has found commonplace usage amongst educational practitioners, innovative researchers and policy makers over the last twenty years.

Due to the widespread and variable use of the term “Portfolio” within an endless array of sectors and settings, there is no readily available common, universally accepted definition for portfolio or ePortfolio, the latter of which has become popularised with the evolution of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) making it increasingly more affordable and easier for people to go online and enter the cyberspace thus breaking down the boundaries of time and space and allowing worldwide collaboration and sharing.

Many definitions for ePortfolio can be found in the existing literature and various have been enthusiastically adopted or preferred by the so-called “portfolio gurus”. The following examples provide a limited but useful selection of those commonly used.

ePortfolio: “a collection of authentic and diverse evidence, drawn from a larger archive, [representing] what a person or organization has learned over time, on what the person or organization has reflected or what they have designed for presentation to one or more audiences for a particular rhetorical purpose.” (NLII, 2003)

“An ePortfolio is a highly personalized, customizable, web-based information management system, which allows students to demonstrate individual and collaborative growth, achievement and learning over time” (LDP, 2003–4, p. 3)

‘An e-portfolio is a purposeful aggregation of digital items – ideas, evidence, reflections, feedback etc., which ‘presents’ a selected audience with evidence of a person’s learning and/or ability’” (JISC, 2009, p. 1)

ePortfolio: “a collection of authentic and diverse evidence, drawn from a larger archive, representing the capital developed by a reflective learning individual or organisation designed to exploit/valorise their assets in a particular context.” (Ravet, 2007, p. 3).

Some common elements can be derived from the definitions above:

- The intentional act of collecting and compiling items/evidence and “products” of learning. The design of a portfolio is not an easy task (learning is a complex process and identifying learning achievement and effective demonstration of applied skills and knowledge is even more demanding). The methods of selecting items in terms of their relevance together with ensuring that these items and relevant experiences are suitably represented, sorted and clustered becomes a crucial part of the development of the portfolio.
- Planning and designing a Portfolio is not a “one-off” activity. In reality, a portfolio can never be considered as a finished entity. It is an on-going “work in progress”, a continuously enrichable tool which accompanies people throughout their development and their lives (if considered from the perspective of lifelong learning).
- The process of “reflecting” on products/items/ideas which assign the individual clear ownership and a unique role to play in the portfolio. The core process of building up a portfolio centres on the process of reflection, which is at the root,

or even better, transversal to the design of a portfolio. *“The reflections become the identifying character or unique expression of the individual creating the portfolio (Heath, 2002). Through these reflections, the audience (self, professor, mentor, adviser, student, administrator, professional developer, and/or licensure board) is able to form a deeper understanding of the creator’s growth as he or she analyzes, evaluates and synthesizes his or her own work (Kilbane & Milman, 2003). As Barrett (2005) reminds us “reflection is not a mirror, it’s a lens.” (Carmean & Christie, 2005, p. 10).*

- The interpretation and representations of the relationships between and amongst the assets in order to meet an aim or requirements: multiple e-portfolios might be created from the same repository or set of repositories. It is a meaningful cross-linked exercise to construct meaning though and over time and space, and, from curricula, life experiences, communication, and feedback.

In addition it must be mentioned that, the shift from a paper-based portfolio to ePortfolio brings many advantages to the whole picture, and the major advantages can be identified as follows:

- Over time, a paper based portfolio can become a massive document or folder. The sheer size or volume of information contained within can prevent the reader having the necessary access or opportunity to retrieve the full set of assets potentially available; different areas of the portfolio can have varying levels of relevance to different readers and the readers may need to trawl large volumes of irrelevant information to find the data elements relevant to their needs. In an electronic format, the evidence that is relevant and fit for the seeker’s purposes can be readily retrieved and combined in a meaningful way.
- A paper-based portfolio may be considered a sequence of documents /evidence (e.g. education, work, leisure and vol-

untary activities). The ePortfolio allows the creation of hyperlinks between varying evidence which can provide support in different ways of prioritising, organising, assembling, manipulating and retrieving digital data. In such a way, it supports multiple reflection processes and not just a linear thought process.

- In some cases the representation of experiences can be done more easily by means of video, audio, pictures and not merely paper-based evidence.
- The portfolio tends to evolve and expand over time and therefore it must be easily portable, “move” with the owners wherever they go.
- The design of eportfolio is a demanding task and time should not be wasted in searching for evidence between possible locations (home, work, etc.) or making hard copies to be distributed to different stakeholders.
- An eportfolio is a way of presenting an individual to the world and therefore can be shared with different stakeholders or other parties involved. It can allow different access and the possibility to initiate communication and feedback processes with others, which in turn leads to ongoing refinements and improvements of the tool and the underpinning process.

EPORFOLIO: DIFFERENT TYPES FOR DIFFERENT AIMS

ePortfolio is a multifaceted tool with a range of purposes. Amongst the endless range of potential uses, of particular interest are those defined by JISC (2007, p. 8) related to;

- *Completion*– the facility to collate and compile a relevant body of documentary evidence that is specifically targeted at supporting an application for a specific job or the admission to further study of a specific nature.

- *Transition*– the facility to provide and have evaluated a more comprehensive and real time overview of a learners’ achievements and needs as they transition into a new working, learning or social environment, which allows both the person undergoing the change and those responsible for supporting the change to adapt and react to ongoing needs and provide suitable proactive support to allow successful transition as it is required rather than relying on retrospective response to already existing issues.
- *Learning, Teaching and Assessment* – the facility to offer greater and real-time support for effective learning processes that involve reflective and interactive activities including formative assessment, which additionally offer suitably accurate and substantive evidence to allow effective summative assessment to be undertaken by the relevant parties.
- *Personal development planning* (PDP) and *continuing professional development* (CPD) – supporting and evidencing the pursuit and achievement of personal or professional competences.

The Australian ePortfolio Project (2008) has identified six different portfolio typologies:

- *Assessment ePortfolios*: utilised to demonstrate successful achievement in meeting a certain, pre-defined standard, compliance with a regulatory or standard requirement in relation to defined criteria, or achievement of an acceptable level of competency in some activity. Such requirements are often imposed by a recognised authority, agency or body tasked with ensuring that an acceptable level of quality is maintained within a particular area of activity or professional expertise. Scoring Matrices (Rubrics) are commonly used to score assessment portfolios. Typical examples would be university students who are required to submit assessment ePortfolio’s that provide unequivocal documentary evidence that they have attained the required competencies necessary to under-

take the defined activities as prescribed. University Departments, schools, private institutions and businesses often use assessment ePortfolios for accreditation purposes.

- *Presentation ePortfolios*: employed to provide evidence of learning or achievement to a defined audience or peer group. The aim of such ePortfolios is to demonstrate to and persuade a group of listeners of the suitability and appropriateness of the skills competencies and rationale of the presenter/s in meeting the specific requirements of the audience. Often, the purpose is to allay the concerns or fears of the audience or generate confidence amongst them as to the soundness of the approach been taken and the bona fides of those prepared to undertake the activity. Presentation portfolios may contain high levels of instructive and descriptive information and are often used to demonstrate professional qualifications. Typical examples would be a job-seeking engineer who might create a presentation ePortfolio that includes listings of relevant qualifications obtained and specific examples of where these skills were put into actual use, or, indeed, a consultant who outlines in an ePortfolio the advantages (savings in time or cost) accrued from their involvement in previous projects. University faculty members might use them at faculty review meetings to collate and present the level of teaching and research work being undertaken as a means of supporting requests for tenure.
- *Learning ePortfolios*: drawn on to document, guide, and advance learning over time. They usually emphasise the critical role “reflective process” plays in learning and may be often developed to mirror closely the immediate learning or curricular context, which in the case of Secondary School students would be predominantly formal in nature. ePortfolios may also be used to promote metacognition, plan learning, or for the integration of diverse learning experiences. A typical example would be where students might develop a learning eP-

ortfolio that allows them to monitor their progress and reflect upon how their skills set and knowledge base has developed as the course progresses over time.

- *Personal development ePortfolios*: personal development planning may be defined as 'a structured and supported process undertaken by an individual in which they are able to reflect upon their learning achievements, the effectiveness and suitability of their performance in respect to what was intended and make ongoing plans for the development of their personal educational and career paths in a manner that reflects the advances made, and achievements gained, while also identifying areas that need to be strengthened or worked on. By nature, personal development ePortfolios encompass or share elements with both Learning ePortfolios and presentation ePortfolios but their specific scope differs from the others as they are most often related to professional development and employment.
- *Multiple-owner ePortfolios*: allow more than one individual to participate in the development of content and presentation. Multiple owner ePortfolios often combine elements of all the above portfolio types, depending on the objective and specific scope intended. If intended for information sharing and communication purposes such as a website or a group blog, the Presentation ePortfolio typology is usually the predominant format, while when used by a group of learners to present evidence of their academic growth through group collaboration, the Learning ePortfolio typology is more commonplace. Multiple owner ePortfolios often find application in business and industry type environments, where they are used to represent the work and growth of an organisation or organisational unit. In such cases, they may be referred to as *program* or *institutional portfolios*.
- *Working ePortfolios*: collective typologies combining numerous individual portfolios. The individual portfolios may be of

any of the aforementioned typologies. Importantly, the Working ePortfolio allows multiple threads and viewpoints as constituted by the different portfolios included to be compared and contrasted, and provides the opportunity for a comprehensive assessment and evaluation of often multifaceted and complex processes or projects. In the terms of the NLII definition, a working portfolio is the larger archive from which the contents of one or more ePortfolios may be selected. The complete working ePortfolio is generally accessible only to owner or contributors while access to defined sections may be provided to other individuals and groups.

From looking at the varied applications and typologies described, it becomes apparent that the concept of ePortfolio involves a multiplicity of stakeholders. Within education, it can be seen that, besides students and individuals themselves, teaching staff, learning designers, academic developers, ICT managers, career counsellors, guidance officers, software vendors, and policy makers may be involved. Extending the scope further downstream of education, employers and members of professional bodies can also be included.

It is apparent that universities world wide have a great deal to contribute to the development of the concept and can play a key role in supporting students in designing meaningful ePortfolios which do not only provide ongoing evidence of the learning achievements acquired during their academic career but also better preparation for them to face the recruitment phase and to be ready to answer interview questions, as well as analyse, anticipate and meet selection criteria or job profile requirements more effectively. University graduates will be able to present themselves and their competences in a more effective way since they are more adept at reflecting on their overall learning experience and are able to extrapolate valuable assets

from a variety of real life examples and consider themselves in a broader career development context.

EPORTOFOLIO: SUPPORTING TRANSITION FROM UNIVERSITY
TO THE JOB MARKET

It seems clear that ePortfolio can fit different purposes and therefore support different processes. Amongst the possible functions focused on in this article is that of ePortfolio serving as a tool for promoting, supporting, accompanying and enhancing employability within the university sector.¹

As mentioned in the ALTC & QUT guide, “ePortfolio concepts for employers, professional bodies and careers services” (2009), ePortfolios can assist with a range of activities, including the following.

- *Recruitment and appraisal processes:* Using ePortfolios, job applicants are better able to identify, contextualise and understand how their existing skills meet the potential employer’s requirements and, equally importantly, to identify their development needs in order to be better placed for future opportunities. Such understanding improves their ability to present themselves in a manner that achieves maximum market placement. From the perspective of the would-be employer, the use of ePortfolios can enhance the quality and coherence of job and promotion applications, streamlining the recruitment and candidate appraisal processes.
- *Training Needs and Career Planning:* ePortfolios can assist in “Gap Analysis”, allowing identification of skills gaps and training needs. This has advantages for all parties. HR de-

¹ The focus on supporting University graduates to enter the labour market is the main aim of the Europlacement project in which the University of Bologna is partner.

partments can develop targeted employee development plans and thus make more efficient use of their often limited training budgets. They are also provided with the opportunity to review and reflect on the effectiveness of the recruiting processes, i.e., whether the match they are looking for is in fact realistic. Quite often, delayed recruitment or perceived candidate failure relates to the fact that employers specify requirements and skill sets that do not reflect current market availability or current educational contexts or supply and a perfect fit is highly unlikely. In such cases, the candidate profile may need to be rationalised and greater emphasis placed on employee development/training. Therefore, ePortfolios can serve as a tool to support staff performance and workforce planning.

- *Continuing Professional Development (CPD)*: ePortfolios provide an effective means of showcasing and providing evidence of CPD activities. Such documented evidence is a pre-requisite for many professional accreditations and continued compliance with both voluntary standards and regulatory requirements. Such standards and regulations are becoming an ever increasing part of the quality landscape of modern industrial practice, particularly within the Service and Healthcare Sectors. In addition, ePortfolios allow for a more comprehensive and more standardised approach to the identification of both short and long-term staff career development needs.
- *Recognition of prior learning (RPL)*: a major obstacle for the process of Continued Professional Development, the increased availability of specialist training and educational courses together with a rapidly growing supply sector for such courses and the promotion of the concept of Life-Long Learning is the question of how learning is valorised and recognised by prospective employers and society at large. ePortfolios provide a suitable tool for collating and evaluating employee achievements for formal RPL documentation. They allow for stream-

lining and standardisation of the process. By permitting the skills, abilities and achievements of a particular employee to be compiled in a central repository, and aligned with specific skills sets recognised by higher and vocational education institutions makes the RPL process simpler and more efficient.

- *Internationalisation of the workforce*: increasing globalisation of the labour market and workforce often results in difficulties with cross-candidate comparisons, due to differing approaches to qualifications and professional requirements amongst the different countries. ePortfolios provide a more detailed comparative overview of a candidate's abilities. Greater transparency can be provided and equivalence between academic qualifications is more easily determined when the range of specific experiences and skills an individual has attained are clearly detailed and directly comparable or contrastable within a standard framework.

Governmental policies that support the concept of Lifelong Learning are increasingly commonplace within Europe, United States, Canada and New Zealand and, in the recognition of the need to valorise and recognise the benefits of such learning, ePortfolio development is increasingly being promoted and becoming a key driver for the implementation of these policies. Adoption of ePortfolios by employers, careers services and professional associations is seen as essential if the value of employability skills is to be truly recognised. Employability skills are being viewed more and more as "the lens" through which employers and employees alike can accurately and effectively view their own development together with that of their career paths (effectively, one and the same thing if Lifelong learning is fully embraced). Adopting the use ePortfolios into business and recruitment practices can provide a common standardised language with which to engage both new graduates and established workers. (ALTC & QUT, 2009, p. 3)

Higher education institutions around the world are introducing ePortfolio systems and encouraging their students to develop ePortfolios since they provide an essential tool for working with academic staff to prepare students for work placement, work integrated learning activities, or employment in their chosen career.

Currently, in the higher education sector in Europe and beyond (Canada, United States, Australia and New Zealand), many ePortfolio experiences are taking place, of which the following specific examples of the use of the portfolio as a tool for supporting transition from university to the labour market and preparing students to fulfil industry's requirements are worth mentioning:

“The Careers and Employment Service at Queensland University of Technology has developed an institution-wide student ePortfolio platform. In tandem with a Career Development Program designed to help students focus on different aspects of career development during their studies at university, the practical relevance of the ePortfolio has been greatly enhanced. Included in the Career Development Program are a series of modules such as Workplace Placement Preparation, Career Preparation, Career Management and Workplace Resilience. Students are encouraged to engage with the Student ePortfolio for each module and within each module their activities scaffolded. The program is built within the learning management system, and university academics have the opportunity to embed the different modules into the curriculum in order to increase the familiarity of the students with realistic career destinations. By doing so, student certainty about their course choice is improved and it becomes apparent to them how the curriculum develops capabilities and skills that will enhance their future employability. Students are encouraged to utilise and also contribute to the development and the effectiveness of the ePortfolio by assisting in the development and recording of graduate capabilities and employability skill acquisition” (ALTC & QUT, 2009, p. 3).

At the School of Architecture and Built Environment at the University of Westminster, e-portfolios were introduced for students at a number of different levels in order that they could gather and reflect on evidence of skill acquisition to meet the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) requirements being promoted by associated/ relevant professional bodies.

“Dumfries and Galloway College (DGC), one of a consortium of institutions led by the University of Paisley, participated in the Individualised Support for Learning through ePortfolios (ISLE²) project¹⁷ during 2005–2007. The ISLE project viewed Personal Development Planning (PDP) as pivotal to the learner’s experience. The Dumfries and Galloway College initiative focused, in particular, on the naturally occurring links between employability skills and PDP and developed a bespoke e-portfolio system. While initially focused on learners in construction and computing, the program is now implemented college wide. While PDP is primarily owned and managed by learners, ISLE proposed that it should also be ‘a structured and supported experience’, embedded into the existing tutorial and teaching programme. The experiences from DGC indicate that learners are best introduced to e-portfolio use during tutorial sessions and at the start of a year, rather than part way through. ePortfolio structure was also identified as being important when embedding PDP.” (JISC, 2008, p. 20)

The Career Advisory Service page of the University of Kent (UK) website, provides access to different sections containing various on-line tools such as Applications & Interviews, Sample CVs, Questionnaires, Answers to 150 Interview Questions, Practice Interviews, etc., together with detailed instruction on how to build an electronic portfolio. Particular examples of ePortfolio

² ISLE: Individualised Support for Learning through ePortfolios, <http://isle.paisley.ac.uk/default.aspx>

in Art and Multimedia design, together with all the previously mentioned support tools, are all downloadable from the website.

At the University of Greenwich, over 2000 learners were instructed to develop a form of Personal Development Portfolio, which included self assessment, followed by the development of action points and then reflection. To support this process all learners were introduced to e-portfolio. As part of the programme, weekly tasks helped learners to engage with the PDP and these activities focused mainly on career and study skills.

The Career Portfolio tool of FSU (Florida State University)'s Career Portfolio Program (CPP) prepares students for the world of work through planning, reflection, skill development, and portfolio documentation. The CPP is used to identify the students' learning experiences that lead to the development of their desired skills, provide a collection point of students' accomplishments and skill documentation, and develop a potential marketing tool to be used to support the students when they set out to seek further education or employment.

The Enhancing Learning Progression (ELP) project has explored and piloted ePortfolio use for transition in a range of learning contexts and amongst different learners: Higher Education for schools, Higher Education in workplace settings and transfer between Higher Education Institutions. The project has identified a number of key benefits of transition for learners such as increased motivation, being able to better plan for the future and the ability to make more realistic career choices. On the basis of the observed outcomes, the e-Portfolios Student Learning (ePISTLE) project has also produced guidance on e-portfolios for transition and progression activities.

CONCLUSIONS: CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

This article has focused on a particular function of the ePortfolio to support the transition from higher education to the work place. The concept of the ePortfolio opens the door to many challenging questions which are topics of current debate and the subject of further research amongst all the parties involved such as students, teaching staff, ICT educational developers, academic boards, policy makers, guidance and careers officers, working associations, and employers. The questions address legal, pedagogical, organisational/institutional, technological, and cultural dimensions.

- Where should the ePortfolio be stored in order to assure credibility and transparency of the digital items and also assure data protection? Which parts of the ePortfolio should be available for public access? In which way should Europass tools be strategically embedded in the ePortfolio?
- In what way can ICT applications assure portability of ePortfolios which have been developed within a specific university's ICT setting? On which ICT standard should dialogue amongst the different sectors be based?
- Are the advisors and guidance staff working within the university ready to face the challenge that the ePortfolio addresses? Do they have the necessary competences to support the process?
- Are the employers and working association ready to embed ePortfolio into their recruitment practices?

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Multimedia Technologies and ICT in organising e-Portfolio for students

ABSTRACT

An electronic portfolio, also known as an e-portfolio or digital portfolio, is a collection of electronic evidence assembled and managed by a user, usually on the Web. Such electronic evidence may include inputted text, electronic files such as Microsoft Word and Adobe PDF files, images, multimedia, Blog entries, and hyperlinks.

One of the approaches, which can be used for improving the attractiveness of the e-portfolio is presented, and it is an implementation of the multimedia technologies in it. In this case we are speaking about multimedia electronic portfolio. What makes them very different from the traditional portfolios is that they can include scanned or digital photos, video and sound clips, animations, recordings of the students, text, traditional writings and drawings.

Two main groups of tools (Non Web Authoring Tools and Web Authoring Tools) for creating multimedia e-portfolio are presented.

KEYWORDS: e-portfolio, Technological Change: Choices and Consequences; Diffusion Processes

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INTRODUCTION

The use of modern multimedia technologies and ICT for organising professional ePortfolios for students at the Universities is discussed in this paper. Structuring web-pages, web-sites or blogs with multimedia characteristics as possible tools for organising student's E-Portfolio is also presented.

The Lisbon strategy for creating European educational space and the Bologna declaration specify the following priority actions:

- Studying as a value;
- Information, management and advice;
- Investment of time and resources;
- Removal of the gap between people and educational/learning opportunities;
- Creating portfolios allowing citizens to present their professional qualifications all over Europe;
- Innovative study approaches;
- Creating Internet-based educational portals.

From the above, it can be seen that the creating portfolios for citizens in general, and for students in particular, is one of the priority activities.

The most general definition of a portfolio is "records of separate steps of progress of the individuals". In education, portfolio refers to a personal collection of information describing and documenting a person's achievements and learning.

Portfolio can be designed as a file containing students' achievements (as documents and related materials) on different aspects: educational, social, communication, and creativity for a certain period of time. It contains a collection of projects and tasks performed during the study, personal achievements, improving personal professional qualifications etc. It can present a wide range of aspects of students' work, successes and problems. The portfolio serves as a way for the self assessment

(reasoning, argumentation) of one's own cognitive and creative work, based on the mechanism of reflection.

When a portfolio is stored in an electronic container (CD, DVD), or published in virtual web space we refer to electronic portfolios. An electronic portfolio, also known as an e-portfolio or digital portfolio, is a collection of electronic evidence assembled and managed by a user, usually on the Web. Such evidence may include inputted text, electronic files such as Microsoft Word and Adobe PDF files, images, multimedia, blog entries, and hyperlinks.

Two visions to student portfolio are possible:

1. From the side of the individual – a private portfolio, which shows education, skills, and interests to everybody, who is interested. The information and data published here are sometimes of subjective nature;
2. From the side of administration – let us say it is an official portfolio. The organisation and contents of such portfolios are oriented mainly towards presenting a person as a component (element) in the organizational structure of the university. The data have to be objective and able to predict the person's progress and support the decision making process when it is necessary.

Naturally, the primary benefit for the faculty is to provide a tool for better management and reviewing of, and reflecting and commenting, on students' work. Administrators may see the value of ePortfolios for the following reasons[1]:

- Creating a system of tracking student work over time, in a single course, with both the students and the faculty reflecting on it;
- Aggregating many students' work in a particular course to see how the students are progressing toward learning goals as a whole;

- Assessing many courses in similar ways that are all part of a major one and thus, by extension, assessing the entire program of study.

Ultimately, all these benefits provide administrators with highly useful data for accreditation. Further, they may discover how to:

- Integrate courses with new methods, orienting syllabi and curricula around learning goals;
- Encourage continuity of student work from semester to semester in linked courses;
- Have a more fully informed and dynamic, constantly updated view of their students' progress in a program, which is very helpful in formative assessment.

In this context and in terms of technology, a digital story is a digital video clip, told in the author's own voice, illustrated mostly with still images, with an optional music track added for emotional effect. Rhetorically, a digital story is a personal narrative that may show the author's identity: strengths, weaknesses, achievements, disappointments, learning experiences, passions, and hopes for the future; in other words: reflection. [2]

Voice, as defined above, is often missing from electronic portfolios, both literally and rhetorically. A digital story provides that voice: listening to the author, we hear a real person, getting a sense of their unique personality. [2] One of the approaches of improving attractiveness of the portfolio is using multimedia technologies for its development.

What makes them very different from traditional portfolios is that they can include scanned or digital photos, video and sound clips, animations, recordings of students, text, traditional writings and drawings

A portfolio is to display one's talents and proficiencies demonstrating one's knowledge and skills. The question that one should ask is "What am I trying to tell the reader about myself?" How one answers this question depends on the targeted audi-

ence. It ought to be remembered that the portfolio is a personal reflection, and thus should look very professional and different tools should be used for its creation [3]

The main arguments for using multimedia objects in e-portfolios are the following:

- perceiving the facts from the portfolio becomes easier;
- opportunity for presenting large volumes of information (a picture or a fragment of music can contain much more information than a plain text file);
- when a person is reading, looking at and listening to at the same time, he is receives and apprehends much more information than when he is only reading, looking at or listening;
- possibility for creating compact portfolios using links to different multimedia objects;
- implementation and use of WYSIWIG (What You See Is What You Get) technology;
- as a side effect, there is the possibility of including legacy and memoir issues in e-portfolios.

Digital stories can provide us with an opportunity to leave a legacy of our family stories for those who come after us. Legacy stories are usually told **about** a person or a place.

In contrast to a legacy story, a memoir is very personal, told in the first person, focusing on the memories of the storyteller. Memoirs are autobiographical in nature, but much more personal and reflective. They are usually much longer than a typical digital story.

BASIC TOOLS FOR CREATING AND DEVELOPING E-PORTFOLIOS

Hyperstudio [4]

Hyperstudio is a program, which can be recommended as a multimedia authoring software for electronic portfolios. It is particularly useful in terms of literacy because you can include

text boxes with almost unlimited space for typing and importing from a word processor. It is a powerful multimedia tool that increases student achievement. Its advantages also include improved problem-solving and creative thinking skills, appeal to a wide variety of student interests and learning styles, and reinforcement of student development in project-based education. It is an easy-to-use multimedia authoring tool which allows incorporation of text, graphics, sound, video, hyperlinks and active URLs into one's e-portfolio.

Power Point

A Power Point software package can also be used for creating an electronic portfolio. Power Point allows the user to select a presentation design that automatically generates a background theme. The user can also create his/her own background with fills, pictures, textures, etc. The second screen provides an interactive menu with each button linking to another slide. Navigational buttons allow the user to go to the next slide, the previous slide, or the home page menu from each slide. You can create buttons that link to another Power Point presentation, another document or spreadsheet, an Acrobat Reader pdf file, or another program application. The page layout will depend on whether one is bringing in text, graphics, tables, or charts.

In addition, a multimedia electronic portfolio can be created with an interactive menu using Power Point. Rather than creating a linear slide by slide Power Point, one can create a menu with links to slides of his/her artefacts. Each button will link directly to the different slide topics. You can also create navigation buttons in the auto shapes menu. They are called action buttons and you edit those from the slide show menu.

Web Authoring Tools

This section contains a listing of direct links to the most widely used HTML editors and site management tools. Many of the

editors listed below are What You See Is What You Get (WYSIWYG) HTML editors, some of which have the option to view the HTML source code. These are quite popular due to the low learning curve.

The Web Authoring Tools are divided into three parts: HTML/Text Editors, Site Management/HTML Editing Tools, and Additional Resources. A list of the more widely used tools is given below.

HTML/TEXT EDITORS

Adobe PageMill [5]

Adobe PageMill is a WYSIWYG HTML editor, equipped with an interface that allows users to “view-as-you-create.” Users can opt to view and edit the HTML source code. This application also supports frames/tables, site upload via FTP, and text imports from programs such as Microsoft Word, Corel WordPerfect, Microsoft Excel, dBASE, and others. It is provided by Adobe Systems Inc. for both Macintosh and Windows platforms.

AOLPress [6]

AOLpress is a free WYSIWYG HTML editor that offers a WYSIWYG and HTML editing mode. MiniWeb, a feature capable of functioning as a simple site manager, also allows for existing HTML files to be easily imported. The editor also supports auto creation of tables, frames, lists, and various other page attributes with the click of a button. Pages can be published on non-AOL servers that support the HTTP PUT protocol. It is provided by America Online, Inc. and is available for Macintosh, Unix, and Windows.

BEdit [7]

BEdit is a text and HTML editor available for Macintosh only (non-WYSIWYG). This editor offers great functionality and control over HTML code. As a powerful text editor, it offers features such as multiple undo, multi-file find and replace, the capability to read all DOS/Unix/Mac files up to 2 GB in size, and more. At the same time, acting as an HTML editor, it offers HTML specific features such as floating tool palettes, syntax coloration, and HTML syntax checking. Using this editor with a browser is as simple as clicking a button, allowing one to view a web page as it is created. It also supports many programming languages including C/C++, HTML, Java, Perl, Pascal, Assembly language, Fortran, TeX, etc.

Crackerjack [8]

Crackerjack is a non-WYSIWYG HTML editor, available for Microsoft Word 6.0 and later editions, used to create web pages. HTML code is inserted into any prepared Word or ASCII document. Features of this program include syntax coloration, as well as auto addition of HTML tagging for lists, paragraphs, forms, backgrounds/colours, etc. The auto addition of HTML code is completed through 4 toolbars, an HTML 2.0 spec tags, HTML 3.0 spec tags, customizable, and forms toolbar. It is available for Macintosh and Windows.

Home Page [9]

Home Page is a WYSIWYG HTML editor that supports frames, tables, form tools, Java applets, multimedia plug-ins (i.e., Shockwave and Quicktime), and more. A direct source code HTML editing option is provided. The publish feature facilitates easy site consolidation and upload of files to the chosen server. It is available for Macintosh and Windows.

SITE MANAGEMENT/HTML EDITING TOOLS

Adobe SiteMill [10]

Adobe SiteMill offers an easy solution to managing HTML documents and their links at new and existing sites. Links can be checked and corrected with simple drag-and-drop of a file in both HTML and PDF documents. Currently, this application is included with PageMill for the Macintosh, but can be used with various other editors.

GoLive CyberStudio [11]

CyberStudio, going beyond a basic WYSIWYG editor, offers many helpful features enabling one to completely design and publish a website. Pages can be edited within the layout, HTML code, or the unique outline editor mode, all of which are accompanied by helpful tool palettes. Site document and graphical management capabilities are also included. There is a built-in JavaScript Actions and Development Kit for easy script building. CyberStudio supports multimedia and colour technology through QuickTime editing and ColorSync. It is available for Macintosh.

HoTMetal Pro [12]

This application offers three editing environments, which include a WYSIWYG graphical HTML editing mode, an HTML-Tag view mode, and a direct HTML source code editing mode. HoT-Metal Pro provides helper features such as (1) Site Maker and a step-by-step tutorial for creating a website without exposure to HTML; (2) Information Manager, a visual means by which one can manage site documents and links; (3) Power Tools, a collection of the latest tools including a personal web server, database-enabling software, Java editor, VRML creator, and animated GIF tool; (4) FX, a drag-and-drop collection of Java applets and scripts, animated GIFs, image maps, and Dynamic HTML, and

(5) an HTML syntax checker. In addition to this, HoTMetal Pro contains a frame, Cascading Style Sheet (CSS), and graphics editor, and offers the ability to import text from programs such as Microsoft Word, Corel Word Perfect, Microsoft Excel, and more. It is available for Windows.

Macromedia Dreamweaver [13]

Macromedia Dreamweaver is both a “visual HTML” (WYSIWYG) and HTML source code editor. It can be used as a visual tool. Dreamweaver supports table and frame creation through a drag-and-drop environment, Cascading Style Sheet (CSS) standards, CSS-P (CSS positioning), Netscape Layers, and JavaScript (including image rollover effects, animations, etc.). Some site management capabilities are also included. Two of the most noteworthy features are link checking/editing and a library for commonly used content. It is available for Macintosh and Windows.

Microsoft FrontPage [14]

Microsoft FrontPage includes a WYSIWYG editor, which provides frames and tables support, Microsoft Image Composer, Microsoft GIF Animator, and an archive of images for facile graphics incorporation. FrontPage supports the inclusion of Cascading Style Sheet (CSS), browser plug-ins, database content (performing dynamic database queries), Java applets, JavaScript, ActiveX controls, and Microsoft Visual Basic. Other features such as wizards and templates accelerate the building process. For existing sites, FrontPage offers an import function. To facilitate management capabilities, FrontPage offers a view of navigational links, folders, and all files, as well as its best management feature: automatic hyperlink updates. This web tool is available for Macintosh and Windows.

NetObjects Fusion [15]

NetObjects Fusion is unique in that it offers a “site-oriented approach” rather than a simple WYSIWYG page editor. In other words, it allows users to visually map out the site structure, make global changes, automatically update links, and construct and organize individual pages without using HTML or Dynamic HTML coding. Database publishing is also supported, although support varies according to platform. Once the site is designed, the entire site structure, including the HTML pages, is generated from a NetObjects database. It is available for both Macintosh and Windows.

WebQuest [16]

In education, a WebQuest is a research activity in which students read, analyze, and synthesize information using the World Wide Web. WebQuest is an inquiry-oriented activity in which some or all of the information that learners interact with comes from the resources on the Internet, optionally supplemented with videoconferencing.

The WebQuest is valued as a highly constructivist teaching method, during which students actively build their own understanding of a topic. “Authentic,” or real-world questions or problems are often researched, and students work cooperatively to find solutions.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES***Beginner’s Guide to HTML [17]***

The Beginners’s Guide to HTML is an excellent resource both to learn HTML and to use as a quick reference. It addresses basic topics including what an HTML document is, what it requires, and how to put HTML documents on the Web. The rest of this site focuses on creating HTML documents. This guide does a

great job of explaining markup tags, linking, images, tables, and more.

Doctor HTML [18]

Doctor HTML is an HTML syntax checker provided by Thomas Tongue and Imagiware, Inc. To use this online utility, the user simply enters the URL of the HTML document to be analyzed. The output is an easy-to-understand summary. Doctor HTML will check form structure, hyperlinks, spelling, image syntax, and more. This analysis can be done on a single page or on an entire site. Also included at this site are other HTML resources.

The Web Developer's Virtual Library [19]

The Web Developer's Virtual Library contains most everything one needs to know about Web development. This site, provided by Internet.com, contains articles, links, demos, and much more. Web topics addressed include authoring, HTML, software, multimedia, and general Internet topics. It also provides a glossary for quick access.

Web Mastery [20]

The Web Mastery HyperNews Forums and Resource Lists contain informative discussions and links regarding various web authoring topics. Some of the topics include learning HTML, HTML editors, WWW, servers, HTML converters, and images.

WebReference.com [21]

WebReference.com is a web authoring resource. It provides up-to-date valuable information on the latest tools, news, and skills. Best of all, this site will benefit the novice as well as the webmaster. This site offers online workshops, articles, contests, and more including the Webreference Update newsletter, a valuable resource.

Web 2.0 [22]

There is an emerging group of tools that are server-based, where the software exists online, not requiring the software be installed on a personal computer. Below is a sample of some of the Web 2.0 tools that show promise for supporting digital storytelling.

1. Collaborative writing tools for script development and collaborative writing: www.writely.com or any wiki
2. Audio editing tools (primarily created to capture and publish podcasts online): www.odeo.com, www.podomatic.com
3. Image sharing tools (primarily created to share images online): www.flickr.com, www.photoBucket.com
4. Video editing tools (primarily created to create and publish short video clips online): www.bubbleShare.com, www.jumpCut.com, www.primaryAccess.org
5. Media publishing services (primarily created to share video online): www.vimeo.com, www.ourmedia.org, www.youtube.com, www.video.google.com

The short overview above shows that students have at their disposal quite enough tools for creating e-Portfolios in general, and multimedia Portfolios in particular.

The main problem not discussed so far is the publishing and saving of multimedia portfolios due to large volume of the files containing multimedia objects. Thus, if all of a student's work is stored in e-Portfolios for perpetuity, considering the size of multi-media files, how can universities manage such a huge volume of data? If they can, how will they maintain accessibility over the years as the file formats change? There is only a questionable history of this capability with digital technologies. How useful will electronic portfolios be for assessment and re-accreditation on campuses if implementation is spotty or non-standardized? For implementation to work, years of preparation may be necessary within a department, programme or college.

As to publishing e-Portfolios on discrete media (CD's, ZIP disks, DVD's), it is not acceptable, because of the high security risk and risk of loss. Another possibility is an Internet Accessible Web Site. The concept of a widely accessible Web site storage location is inherently very attractive. Being able to access one's materials from any location is convenient and increases the likelihood that students would take advantage of the storage facility. Security issues abound, however, and making a site secure and private can be costly in software and administration expenses. This approach can be rejected because of excessive security risk, intellectual property concerns, and high setup and administrative costs associated with a secure system.

The next possibility for e-Portfolio publishing is a Student Accessible File Server. In networked environments, the concept of using "shared" drives is well established and with most network operating systems, controlling access is relatively straightforward. There is a modest learning curve associated with this approach, but network file handling tends to be something that students tend to teach one another. Media costs have fallen dramatically and are now on the order of pennies per megabyte.

Among the above approaches for publishing, only the last two are based on network technologies. If one of them has to be chosen, preference should be given to using the File Server, because it is easy to use, relatively secure, easy to backup for redundancy purposes, has little chance of file loss, low administrative overhead costs, and relatively low program costs.

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Azio Barani*

Ethical Importance of Improving Strategic Effectiveness of University Placement Services Underpinning Quality and Value of Stakeholders Social Capital and Promoting Respect of Human Dignity

ABSTRACT

This paper, based on a current Europlacement-LLP project, proposes a hypothetical evaluation model for a European “Career Guidance and Internship Training” Service, integrating ethical, strategic and management thinking. The assessment system deals, in just a single summary document, with a multiplicity of objectives and activities that are selected according to the strategies of the organization, and labelled in order to provide different perspectives, adapting the SWOT analysis and Balanced Scorecard approaches. This way, a more complete picture of assets, resources and system results can be fostered, and opportunities of a deeper analysis and improvement provided. This important tool is characterized by orientation towards future management that starts from an analysis of the current situation and aims at continuously monitoring the strategic objectives of the organization in order to create a single, interrelated model, binding together strategies, tools for decision support and outcomes.

KEYWORDS: University Placement Services; Applied Ethics; Decision Making; Strategic Planning; Organizational Development

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INTRODUCTORY FRAMEWORK FOR THE ETHICAL AND SOCIAL
VALUE OF PROCESSES RELATED TO TRANSITION TO WORK
AND THE UNIVERSITY'S STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Human dignity is recognized as the core principle which grounds the very idea of human rights and contains at least three key elements, namely, an ontological claim concerning the intrinsic value of person; a relational claim about how individuals should be treated by others because of their inherent worth; and a claim concerning the proper role of the state with regard to the individual. In Western democracies the constitutional notion of dignity is aspirational and based on an idea which emanates from the Judeo-Christian idea of individual ethical responsibility and value under God, and further elaborated on by Immanuel Kant, who held human dignity to be inherent and, more importantly, deriving from our status as finite, rational beings capable of autonomous action. Based on this proposition, every person has the right to moral agency, to create their own identity and outline for themselves who they are and how they want to live their lives. This ideal is embodied not only in most constitutional arrangements but also entrenched in many international treaties, for example, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights which advances in its Preamble an international legal organization and imposes a common benchmark of minimum protection necessary for promoting human dignity on the basis that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights"¹. However there is often a considerable gap between formal international standards and instruments of human rights law, and the local social, political, economical and cultural environments in which they are implemented.

A potential example is offered by the labour market dynamics. If the transition processes from higher education to employment

¹ Article 1 available at <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>

is not properly considered and included in the strategic tasks of the academic system and economic policies of government, it could negatively affect both the students' dignity, through educational, motivational, professional and economic background, and, in more indirectly, the society as a whole.

It becomes therefore necessary and urgent to renew the role of the University regarding the labour market, by means of promoting follow-up and insertion of graduates in employment through integrated programs of educational guidance, training and education through the activation of a *job placement* service, making it thus possible to perform a number of actions in a new way to re-model the relationship between universities and businesses, offering innovative ways into employment for young graduates, developing and giving continuity to the role of universities in the system of active policies while also creating a network of services that could be useful for both companies and graduates. The aim is to encourage the creation of an integrated system between universities, businesses, and the public and private sectors (Livraghi, 2010; Rizzoli, 2010). This will increase the effectiveness of *placement* services by means of achieving three final, strategic, key objectives in order to improve:

- the processes involved in the transition from education to work;
- the levels of user satisfaction as far as the consistency between studies and professional opportunities is concerned;
- the quality and value of the *stakeholders'* social capital.

Once the ultimate goals to which all organizational efforts should be directed have been clarified, a University could identify in the Europlacement-LLP project an opportunity to gain knowledge and experience concerning the identification and implementation of best practices adopted at a European and international level in the tools of guidance and transition to work. The objectives that have been set out within the Europlacement-

LLP project can therefore be considered as precious intermediate tasks in the pursuit of the three final objectives listed above.

This paper proposes a hypothetical evaluation model for a European “Career Guidance and Internship Training” Service, integrating strategic and management thinking. The assessment system deals, in just a single summary document, with a multiplicity of objectives and activities selected according to the strategies of the organization, and labelled in order to provide different perspectives, adapting the SWOT analysis and Balanced Scorecard approaches. This way, a more complete picture of assets, resources and system results can be fostered, and opportunities for a deeper analysis and improvement can be provided. This important tool is characterized by an orientation towards future management that starts from an analysis of the current situation and aims at continuously monitoring the strategic objectives of the organization in order to create a single, interrelated model, binding together strategies, tools for decision support and outcomes.

LOGIC AND PURPOSE OF THE INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

In order to facilitate the identification of a toolkit designed to improve guidance and connection between universities and the labor market, we have thought about the importance of going back to a model of integrated assessment that would clarify the current positioning of the organization (where we are) and the results expected by the organization, the so-called “outcome” (where we want to go), and, finally, the address strategies to achieve them (how we want to get there). The underlying logic in the model is the Kaplan and Norton Balanced Scorecard, greatly adapted to suit this specific context. The data are grouped into four areas that correspond to the same number of prospects (according to which the system is analyzed), tied together by cause-

effect relationships, in order to provide an integrated overview of the activities and the performance of the whole organization.

The logical process of evaluation attempts to explain which knowledge, skills and systems the organization (or the staff) needs (Learning and Improvement perspective), in order to innovate and develop the strategic skills for the implementation and optimization of the processes involved (Internal Processes perspective). This will provide value for the recipients of the services and the community (Stakeholders perspective), thereby enhancing the attraction of higher material and immaterial resources to invest (Resources and Investments perspective).

The picture below illustrates the process of continuous feedback among the various perspectives (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. The logical process of continuous feedback among the four perspectives and the cause-effects relationships.

STRUCTURE OF THE MODEL: THE FOUR PERSPECTIVES
APPLIED TO THE "CAREER GUIDANCE AND INTERNSHIP
TRAINING" SERVICE

Mission and objectives

The factors of success of the organization aimed at achieving the strategic objectives determined according to the needs of the stakeholders could be redefined according to the ability to achieve high levels of:

1. students' subjective satisfaction (measured through subjective evaluation: activities and evaluation criteria for assessing the degree of correspondence between career aspirations, path studies and internship experience);
2. stakeholders' objective satisfaction (measured through objective assessment: activities and assessment criteria for the match level between training objectives achieved by the student and internship experience);
3. stakeholders' systemic satisfaction (business and assessment criteria for the match level between the training objectives of the curriculum designed by the University and requirements of the labour market);

1) *Stakeholder perspective*

This perspective allows stakeholders to adapt objectives and activities to the satisfaction, responsiveness to the needs and expectations of participants and stakeholders.

This section illustrates all the outputs (services) carried out or planned to be undertaken to meet the multiple needs of the three main categories of stakeholders benefiting from the performance of the Department / Office, and that contribute to the overall effectiveness of the service: students, faculty and business / public administration. For each type of service, it is required to specify whether the user is in charge of the fee.

2) *Internal Processes perspective*

The internal process management perspective must allow managers to define “critical” processes in which the organization must excel in order to achieve the stakeholders’ satisfaction objectives. These processes deal with:

1. Accessibility (kind of access channel, service access ways);
2. Communication (activities and service communication tools);
3. Supply (ways and channels of service delivery);
4. Organizational and control structure (decision-making procedures for monitoring and evaluation)

3) *Learning and Improvement perspective*

This perspective develops the tasks, activities and measures in order to guide the learning process and improvement.

The goals in the learning and growth perspective provide the cultural and intellectual infrastructure to allow the achievement of ambitious goals in other perspectives.

In particular the model emphasizes the importance of investment on improvement areas, not only on new capital, but also on the research and development of new services, guided by the main key strategic objectives, thus optimizing the use of resources.

There are three main categories in the Learning and Improvement perspective:

1. Stakeholder Relationship Management (methods of detection and assessment of subjective, objective and system satisfaction level; improvement activities of the capital);
2. Knowledge Management (activities and tools for strategic management of information);
3. Strategic Planning System (model of strategic planning; level of adaptation of employees, teams, sectors and strategic objectives of the organizational system).

4) *Resources and Investments perspective*

This context has identified four sub-areas to be monitored in terms of available resources and investments needed to implement improvement processes:

1. Human Capital (quantitative levels of personnel, available or necessary; skills);
2. IT Infrastructures (technological resources, workstations, databases);
3. Facilities and Fixed Assets (offices, buildings, other facilities or fixed infrastructure);
4. Financial Resources (self-financing capacity, financial dependence, types of funding sources).

STRATEGIC PLANNING MODEL

Much of strategic theory has its roots in military history. Having a superior strategy is often preferable to having a numerical advantage with respect to manpower and weapons in battle. Of course, if the numerical disadvantage is too large, then a better strategy may not be able to tip the balance against overwhelming numerical superiority. Nevertheless, even where there is a sizeable numerical inferiority, superior strategy can win the day. Developing an appropriate strategy is a prime focus for any enterprise. One of the first things one has to do in strategy formulation at any level in an establishment is to examine how the organisation relates to the environments around it. In particular, one must focus on the impact that these environments can have on the enterprise's future prosperity.

SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis is a technique specifically designed to help identify suitable strategies for an organisation to follow. It involves specifying and relating together organisational strengths and weaknesses and environmental opportunities and threats. Regarding

its drawbacks, Mintzberg (1994) suggests that SWOT is seldom effective because it is rooted in an organisation's current perceptions. Nevertheless, SWOT is still advocated as a powerful planning tool in all types of organisational activity. Moreover, Mercer (1996) has argued for the importance of SWOT analysis as a management tool providing research data to support cases addressed.

SWOT analysis involves specifying and relating together organisational strengths and weaknesses and environmental opportunities and threats. McDonald and Leppard (1991) provide a good account of SWOT analysis. They suggest that, first, a marketing audit is to be conducted to identify the factors that will affect a particular business. This has some similarity with the cross impact analysis outlined above but it only considers a restricted number of factors. These factors are broken down into internal factors (reflecting the organisation's strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (reflecting the organisation's opportunities and threats). In the case of opportunities and threats, McDonald and Leppard (1991) recommend that these are then entered into two separate matrices (one for opportunities and one for threats) which reflect the probability of occurrence of the events. McDonald and Leppard (1991) recommend that this is then followed by an analysis of competition, a life-cycle analysis of the products or services offered and a product portfolio analysis using a technique such as the Boston consultancy grid (for details of these methods, see McDonald and Leppard (1991)). Once equipped with all this information, it is recommended that one then moves on to identifying critical success factors, undertaking a strengths and weakness analysis (*vis-à-vis* competitors), and identifying key issues that need to be addressed as well as any underlying key assumptions that need to be taken into account. It is recommended that one then moves on to specifying the key objectives, and key strategies and their financial consequences. All of this is a relatively complex procedure and some

of the steps may not be appropriate for all situations. Moreover, as far as using the information generated to produce strategies is concerned, SWOT analysis is not prescriptive. In practice, it is often an activity that is not carried out well. Having identified all the important points, it is all too easy not to know what to do with the data generated.

Although intended as a mechanism to explain strategy rather than to facilitate its generation, the SWOT matrix (Wehrich, 1982) presents a means for facilitating linkages and presents a framework for identifying and formulating strategies. It allows various combinations of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to be considered in juxtaposition and corresponding strategies to be generated. Wehrich judged the usefulness of SWOT on the basis that it enabled the strategist to:

1. identify the organisation's strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities;
2. employ a mechanism for structuring internal and external environmental variables in such a way that competitive strategies could be produced.

In such situations, the strategists systematically scan the internal and external environments, structuring information inputs to be used in the analysis and identifying key relationships between environmental variables to then produce competitive strategies.

Implementing the SWOT matrix requires the following steps to be followed:

1. pinpoint and assess the impact of environmental factors (economic, political, demographic), products and technology, market and competition on the organisation;
2. make a prognosis about the future;
3. undertake an assessment of "strengths and weaknesses" in terms of management and organisation, operations, finance and marketing; and
4. develop strategy options.

Working through this process enables internal and external factors to be entered on a grid and different combinations to be studied. For example, the entry to one cell of the grid could involve maximising opportunities and maximising strengths. This would amount to putting together at least one strength and one opportunity to produce a strategy that capitalises upon this combination.

There is no limitation as to the type of organisational unit that can benefit from this type of analysis. Moreover, any situation that involves strategic decision making can benefit from this approach. Experience also shows that the use of the SWOT matrix can lead to the identification of appropriate strategies for an organisation.

An example of the use of the SWOT matrix in the career guidance service is shown in the next paragraph.

SWOT ANALYSIS AND SWOT MATRIX APPLIED TO THE “CAREER GUIDANCE AND INTERNSHIP TRAINING” SERVICE

The identification of strategic objectives for each university and the synoptic comparison between the partners of the components of the four perspectives can significantly ease:

- first, the elaboration of SWOT analysis (shown in the picture below for University of Parma and a summary for Europlacement-LLP Project Partners) by defining the strengths and weaknesses for the analysis of the inner context and the focus on the opportunities and threats from external context (Fig. 2),
- second, the more important of the two, the reformulation of the objectives, activities and instruments (kit) according to the priority of the strategies emerging from the SWOT matrix, schematically and theoretically shown (Fig. 3) and applied in the following pictures (applied to the University of Parma, Fig. 4).

<p>Internal Factors</p>	<p>Strengths (S)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Levels and kind of qualifications offered - Organizational structure: department devoted - Breadth of services offered by the devoted department - Services shared by about 20% of students - Post-placement services - Minimum of 250 hours (3 consecutive months) - Collaborative relationship with mentor company - Breadth of professional sectors interested - About 3700 affiliated companies - Balanced geographical scopes of the companies 	<p>Weaknesses (W)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proportion between national participants/EU participants/international participants (99% national) - Limited kinds of faculties (quite only humanities) - No certification of informal and non formal competences - No use of innovative techniques to identify companies, to acquire transversal competences
<p>External Factors</p>	<p>Opportunities (O)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General need of higher qualification of labour force - In Italy the ratio of unemployment of university graduates is 7.1%, less than the average total unemployment rate 9.8% - Short time to find a job after graduation - Career entry already starts while studying - Importance of networking - Increase of atypical labour contracts - The inflows of labour demand were concentrated on high skilled (managers, technicians and high specialized workers are about the 27,5% of the gross labour demand in 2008) - The most important increases of the labour demand of young graduates, during the last years, occurred in Valle d'Aosta, Friuli- Venezia Giulia, Trentino-Alto Adige, Emilia-Romagna (Parma and Bologna) and Molise 	<p>Threats (T)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Skills and competences not acquired at University are becoming more and more important - Increase of atypical labour contracts - The labour demand of young graduates absorbed only a limited part of the yearly flow of young Italian university graduates (only 73.3% of the 154.324 graduates in 2001 resulted employed three years later) - Increase of global unemployment rate (in Italy 6.2% in 2007, 6.9% in 2008 and 7.8% in 2009) - In Italy: GDP will decrease by -0.2% in 2008 and - 1% in 2009 - In Italy the women unemployment rates are generally higher - In Italy the unemployment rate of under 25 was 28% in April 2008 - In Italy there is a gap between educational level and quality of employment - In Italy there is a weak tradition in Vocational Training - Increase of international competition

<p>Internal Factors</p>	<p>Strengths (S)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organizational structure: department devoted (except a partner) - Breadth of services offered by the devoted department - Collaborative relationship with mentor company - Breadth of professional sectors interested 	<p>Weaknesses (W)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No certification of informal and non formal competences - Students are not aware enough about needs and opportunities of labour markets - Proportion between national participants/EU participants/international participants (99% national) (Italian partners)
<p>External Factors</p>	<p>Opportunities (O)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General need of higher qualification of labour force - The ratio of unemployment of university graduates is less than the average total unemployment rate - Short time to find a job after graduation 	<p>Threats (T)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Skills and competences not acquired at University are becoming more and more important - Increase of atypical labour contracts - The labour demand of young graduates absorbed only a limited part of the yearly flow of young Italian university graduates (only 73.3% of the 154.324 graduates in 2001 resulted employed three years later) - Increase of global unemployment rate and decrease of GDP - The women unemployment rates are generally higher (except in UK) - In general there is a gap between educational level and quality of employment

Fig. 2. The elaboration of SWOT analysis for University of Parma (in the first section, above) and a summary for Europlacement-LLP Project Partners (in the second section, below).

The SWOT matrix	
<p>Maxi-Maxi SO Strategies This area allows obtaining the best combination of opportunities offered by the external environment and the strengths of the organization.</p>	<p>Mini-Maxi WO Strategies This is the area of strategies aimed at eliminating the internal points of weakness in order to seize all the opportunities that the external context can offer.</p>
<p>Maxi-Mini ST Strategies This strategic area directs the organization to the expression of the strengths that can help to cope with potential threats coming from the outside.</p>	<p>Mini-Mini WT Strategies It is another priority area of strategic intervention. It identifies the plans developed to minimize the risks arising from the combination of external and internal negative factors.</p>

Fig. 3. The SWOT matrix (Wehrich, 1982).

The SWOT matrix applied to the “Career Guidance and Internship Training” Service	
<p>Maxi-Maxi SO Strategies <i>Objective assessment</i> Objective assessment corresponds to the whole of the activities designed to measure the student’s learning during the training period, compared to the educational goals set by the course and delegated to the internship experience. This type of activity is carried out by the lecturer and tutor or mentor of corporate training. Three key-points become crucial in order to achieve an objective assessment: the design of the placement or the definition of training objectives, the placement monitoring by the university tutor, and finally the final evaluation through the collaboration of business mentor whose task is to evaluate the achievements in terms of knowledge and skills. The strategy could be one of improving all communication processes, thus enhancing the intellectual and the social capital that has been built, through research, experience and network of relationships, thereby increasing the levels of trust and satisfaction between the many stakeholders involved.</p>	<p>Mini-Maxi WO Strategies <i>Portal development</i> The implementation of the portal should revolutionize the current website and, firstly, encourage the access to information and opportunities, exploiting both the wide range of agreements signed and the relatively attractive local context in terms of employment. Secondly, this will facilitate the supply and cross-training demand and, thirdly, as far as this crossing is concerned, it would also improve the service delivery process. This will speed up and ease all the administrative stages, especially as far as monitoring and evaluation are concerned.</p>

<p>Maxi-Mini ST Strategies <i>Subjective assessment</i> In this type of assessment could be included all work orientation activities sponsored towards individual students, aimed at establishing a professional project that is substantial to their personal profile and to the employment opportunities of the related market. The strategy could be one of improving all communication processes in order to optimize the experience acquired in the student's satisfaction and subjective evaluation ability, thus decreasing the tendency to use personal contacts.</p>	<p>Mini-Mini WT Strategies <i>Systemic assessment</i> This involves the businesses and institutions that are affiliated to the promotion of apprenticeships and training supply executives of the University in order to identify the consistency of training provision with the needs of the labour market. This phase of evaluation should encourage the redesign of courses. This type of evaluation includes questionnaires for the member businesses and job meetings. The strategy could be one of improving processes of strategic planning and systems of organizational involvement of stakeholders, both internal and external, for instance, through written questionnaires, in order to improve planning ability, for training provision to reduce access time to the labor market, to mitigate the effects of economic crises, and, finally, to promote international mobility. This questionnaire should be aimed at understanding whether the provision of courses is able to adequately prepare students for their stay, compared to the professional course figures that the course itself is expected to create. Moreover, its last task is to recognize the required professional skills that companies cannot fill because of a lack of specific education.</p>
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Fig. 4. The SWOT matrix applied to the "Career Guidance and Internship Training" Service of the University of Parma.

MODEL IMPLEMENTATION: THE STRATEGIC MAP AND ORGANIZATIONAL INVOLVEMENT

In order to help the description of the strategy and create the following, essential link between strategy formulation and execution, a visual representation of cause-effect relationships can be developed through a strategic map.

The first step towards the building of such a map is considering the current positioning of the organization (“where we are”) and having already defined both the results that the organization expects, the so-called “outcome” (“where we want to go”), and the strategic addresses that we need in order to achieve them (“how we get there”).

This simple model shows how the inputs (resources) are transformed through the activities undertaken by the organization (grouped into processes) in order to generate the outputs (products / services) that will allow the outcomes (results) to be achieved. Looking backwards on this model, that is to say starting from the results and concluding with the resources, we can ask questions such as the ones that the basic logic model shows in the following picture (Fig. 5).

What outcomes (results) do you want to achieve?
Which outputs (services) should we generate in order to achieve the expected results?
Which activities or processes should be outstanding in order to generate the outputs that will allow the expected results?
What should the available resources be like in order to excel in the processes that can generate the outputs that will lead to the desired results?

Fig. 5. The questions of the basic logic model.

In other words, once the desired, or intended results have been defined, it can be asked what the elements are that will allow these benefits to be achieved, and, going backwards to the final step, the resources to be identified that are needed for the accomplishment of the desired results.

Building a good strategic map is the first step towards the construction of an integrated assessment model that works and represents the heart of an effective strategic management system of the organization’s performance.

The strategic map is a moment of reflection on the organization's strategy and can be turned into a number of objectives linked by a cause-effect relationship along the perspectives that have been taken into account (from the desired outcomes to the performance drivers that will lead to these results) (Fig. 6).

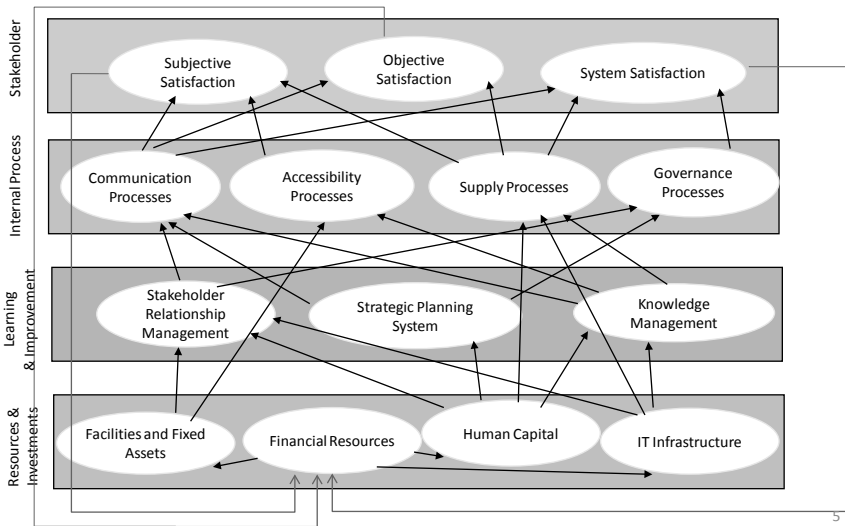


Fig. 6. Hypothesis of strategic map applied to "Career Guidance and Internship Training" Service.

A well-formulated strategy, however well expressed through a strategic map, is not enough. It needs to be properly fulfilled at all levels of the organization in order to effectively achieve the desired results. This would require the involvement of all hierarchical levels of the organizational membership system. Specifically, to do so, it would also require the University and the whole staff which provides the guidance services.

The following figure (Fig. 7) draws a hypothesis of a strategic alignment and organizational involvement in the Service Internship oriented to the identification of a kit of tools for the

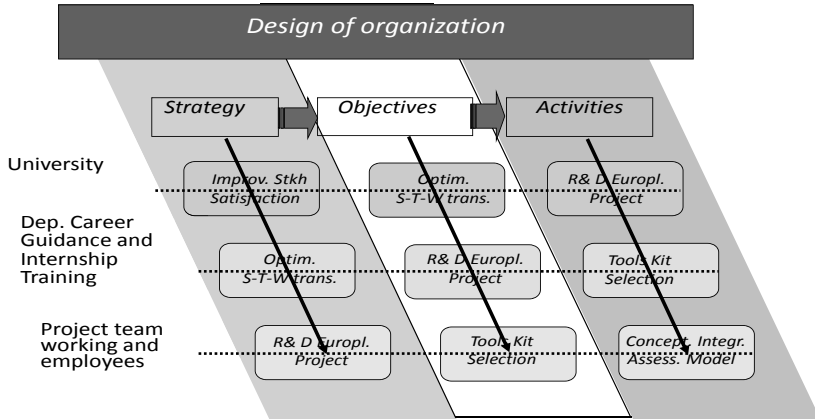


Fig. 7. Hypothesis of a strategic alignment and organizational involvement applied to "Career Guidance and Internship Training" Service.

improvement of effectiveness and efficiency levels. Once the current position (where we are) and the expected results (outcomes) has been reviewed through the implementation of the integrated assessment model, the model on three organizational levels: University, Office / Department Personnel, is drawn. For a better graphic representation, we have simplified turning the operational objectives of the upper organizational level into the strategic objective of the lower level, as well as the upper level activity turns into the operational objective of the lower level. As can be seen, at the end of the process, the central column and row are equivalent. This means that the organizational unit that has been assigned the primary objective (optimization of processes of transition to work) is supported by the higher hierarchical level (considered as a functional purpose for increasing stakeholders' satisfaction), and through the involvement of the dedicated human resources; it has identified methods and operational activities that are crucial to the objective achievement. The example picture ends showing the role that the conceptualization activity of the integrated evaluation model would take.

CONCLUSIONS

Each organization aims at creating an efficient and effective system of performance management in order to acquire a tool that can estimate, manage and improve the strength and success of the system, but also to establish quality measures, costs, speed services for stakeholders and to ensure the steadiness of employees' ability, motivation and purpose. Its aim is to provide a strategy vision in clearly measurable activities and outcomes that can define its success and be shared both within the organization system, and, externally, among the stakeholders. To achieve such a long-lasting success, the organizational culture has to evolve to the point of cultivating the performance improvement as a constant effort. An organization should develop the appropriate abilities in order to keep both its current performances and its efforts under control. This is crucial not only as far as processes improvement is concerned, but also to motivate and educate staff and expand its information system, that is to say, to develop its ability to learn and improve.

The implementation of the model should therefore facilitate the processes for:

- clarifying and obtaining a consensus on assessment and strategy;
- communicating strategic objectives throughout the organization;
- regulating sector and individual objectives to the strategy;
- linking strategic objectives with activities, resources and tools;
- identifying and regulating the strategic initiatives;
- performing periodic and systematic strategic evaluations;
- obtaining feedback to improve the strategy and understand it better.

The chosen model for “Career Guidance and Internship Training” Service, therefore, distinguishes itself from other evaluation

tools because it deals, in just one single summary document, with a multiplicity of objectives and activities that are selected according to the objectives and strategies of the organization, and labelled in order to provide different perspectives. Thus, a more complete picture of assets, resources and system results can be fostered, and opportunities of a deeper analysis and improvement can be provided. This important tool is characterized by its orientation towards future management that starts from the analysis of the current situation and aims at continuously monitoring the strategic objectives of the organization in order to create a single, interrelated model binding together strategies, tools for decision support and outcomes.

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National Case Studies

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The Europlacement Project and the Problems of Employing Young People in Italy

ABSTRACT

This article presents the theoretical approach of the Europlacement with particular reference to the economic crisis and to the Italian university system. In the first section, there is a presentation of the structural changes of the Italian Universities system and of the strategies for improving the employability of young people in Italy. The second section is devoted to the human capital in Italy and the self-referential nature of the system of centralized education and the third section focuses on the integration of training and employment.

KEYWORDS: graduates; labour supply; human capital; labour market transition

FOREWORD

In Italy, the Europlacement project has tried to identify useful instruments to improve the passage of young graduates from the university to the job market². The project was implemented in a

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² The University of Parma focuses particular attention on the placement office, which is viewed as a place of intermediation between training and employment, experimenting modern approaches like internship contracts. These

highly particular period of time: on the one hand, we were in the midst of a worldwide economic crisis that produced numerous effects and accentuated the early problems experienced by young people in approaching the job market (Istat, 2010, Bank of Italy, 2010) and on the other hand, a process of reformation of the Italian university system was also under way (Senate of the Republic, 2009) including specific strategies that should improve the employability of young people by strengthening the integration of training with work experience (Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Policies, and Ministry of Education, Universities and Research, 2009).

The worldwide economic crisis decreased the Gross Domestic Product in Italy in 2008 and 2009³ and this caused a reduction in the demand for workers throughout the country, involving in particular the northern regions, temporary employment and freelance professionals. The slower economic growth then reduced employment⁴, increased unemployment⁵, workers grew discouraged and consequently the rates of inactivity climbed⁶.

provide a combination of on-the-job training and experience in an authentic production setting, as well as the acquisition of an additional post-graduate diploma.

³ The worldwide economic crisis caused a decrease in the gross domestic product in Italy, in the years 2008 and 2009 and this in turn caused a reduction in the demand for workers throughout the country, involving in particular the northern regions of the country, temporary employment and freelance professionals. +1.5% in 2007; -1.3% in 2008; -5.0% in 2009 (European Commission, 2010). Briefly, in the two-year period 2008-2009 the GDP fell by 6.5 points. The real income of families decreased by 3.4%, their consumptions by 2.5%. Exports fell by 22%. The widespread uncertainty and deterioration of prospects for demand induced the enterprises to reduce their investments by 16% (Bank of Italy, 2010).

⁴ The rate of recourse to government-subsidized redundancy schemes increased to 12% at the end of 2009 (Bank of Italy, 2010).

⁵ In Italy, the number of unemployed young people rose to 25.4% in 2009 compared with 7.8% in the average of the country. Triple the usual rate, in other words. It should also be noted that unemployed high school and university

The crisis aggravated the already difficult position of young people on the Italian job market. In the age range between 20 and 34, unemployment had reached 13% on average in 2009. The reduction with respect to 2008 of the proportion of young people was almost seven times lower than that observed among older workers⁷. Younger workers are more often employed in temporary jobs, and new hirings were down by 20%. The gap in working conditions between the new generations and those that preceded them has been widening steadily for years, becoming more unfavorable for the younger ones. Starting salaries, in real terms, have not changed in 15 years (Bank of Italy, 2010).

The number of young people who have finished school and are out of work is increasing in Italy. 21.2% of the population between 15 and 29 are outside the training-employment circuit (*not in education, employment or training*, Neet). This produces extremely negative effects, because it makes their inclusion in either sector more difficult.

Moreover, in the last ten years the university has undergone significant changes that have altered its structural characteristics and aims: it has changed from an elite form of education to a university of the masses, and the number of universities has increased, to respond to the increasing demands of higher education; there has been a reform of the educational format (with three-year degree courses and courses of specialization) that should facilitate exchanges of students and professors among the different countries participating in the so-called "Bologna process"; they have diversified their traditional missions (research and high level training), and now furnish preparation

graduates increased more than for workers with inferior levels of education (Istat, 2010).

⁶ The rate of inactivity reached 37.6% in Italy, in 2009, for the population aged between 15 and 64 (Istat, 2010).

⁷ The employment rate of young people between 20 and 34 is 58.9% compared with 62% previously.

for the exercise of specific professions, manage for-profit enterprises (*spin offs*), and perform placement (Agasisti T., Vittadini G., 2010). These circumstances make it necessary to rethink the goals and functions of the Italian university. An adequate institutional organization could certainly facilitate the process of rendering the different schools independent and responsible, and also make it possible to rate them against a standard.

The strategies for improving the employability of young people in Italy are based on six areas of intervention deemed fundamental (Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Policies and Ministry of Education, the University and Research, 2009):

1. facilitating the transition from school to work;
2. relaunching technical-professional training schools;
3. relaunching the contract of apprenticeship;
4. rethinking of the use of training internships, promoting work experience in the process of studies, educating on safety at the worksite, establishing pension safeguards starting at the school and university;
5. rethinking the role of university training;
6. extending research doctorates to the production system and labor market.

The Europlacement project works prevalently on two areas that are part of the strategies for improving the employability of young people by the Italian government: how to facilitate the transition from school to work (Rizzoli S., 2010) and how to implement apprenticeship contracts in higher education.

HUMAN CAPITAL IN ITALY AND THE SELF-REFERENTIAL NATURE OF THE SYSTEM OF CENTRALIZED EDUCATION

In 2007, Italy had fewer university graduates than the European average. If we observe young people between 25 and 34, we find that only 18.9% are in possession of a university degree,

compared with the European average of 29.9% (Tab. 1). We have fewer graduates than France, the UK, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden.

As in the other countries, young women study for longer than young men. Also in 2007, it was found that 22.9% of young women aged 25-34 were in possession of a university degree, while the percentage fell to only 14.8% among males (Tab. 1). This means 12 percentage points less for Italian males in the comparison with the European average. Tab. 1 shows that we have the fewest young university graduates in Europe with values similar to those of the Czech Republic and Turkey.

Table 1. Percentage of population with tertiary education* in 2007 (age 25-34).

Country	All	Female	Male
EU 27	29.9	33,5	26,4
Belgium	41.3	47.0	35.8
Bulgaria	24.9	32.0	18.2
Czech Republic	15.5	17.0	14.0
Denmark	40.1	44.0	36.2
Germany	22.6	23.4	21.8
Estonia	34.6	43.0	26.3
Ireland	43.9	50.4	37.5
Greece	27.1	30.1	24.2
Spain	38.9	44.0	34.2
France	41.5	46.1	36.8
Italy	18.9	22.9	14.8
Cyprus	47.0	52.3	41.7
Latvia	26.3	32.7	20.0
Lithuania	38.9	45.3	32.6
Luxembourg	35.7	39.8	31.7
Hungary	22.0	26.2	17.9
Malta	22.5	25.0	20.1
Netherlands	36.7	39.3	34.1

Country	All	Female	Male
Austria	18.9	19.2	18.6
Poland	30.0	35.9	24.2
Portugal	21.4	27.8	15.1
Romania	16.6	17.7	15.6
Slovenia	30.1	40.3	20.4
Slovakia	17.5	19.9	15.1
Finland	39.3	47.9	31.1
Sweden	39.9	45.8	34.3
United Kingdom	37.9	39.4	36.3
Croatia	18.3	23.4	13.6
Turkey	12.9	11.1	14.8
Iceland	32.5	36.8	28.5
Norway	41.7	49.1	34.5
Switzerland	35.0	31.0	38.9

* Tertiary education graduates (Isced 5A, 5B or 6).

Source: European Union Labour Force Survey

The position of Italy in 2007 does not mean that prior to that time investments had not been made in human capital in tertiary education. The university reform accelerated the attainment of the three-year degree among 25-year-olds in the country. The figure went from 19.8% in 2000 to 34.8% in 2008, with an increase of as many as 15 percentage points (Tab. 2). The extended cycle degrees or those involving specialization decreased, however, by a percentage point in the same period (Tab. 2).

The university reform produced an increase of three-year degrees, which continued to accelerate until 2005.

Table 2. Graduates by sex and type of degree obtained in Italy. Years: 2000-2008 (on a sample of 100 25-year-olds).

Years	Single-cycle three-year degrees			4-6 year degrees and 2-year courses of specialization		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
2000	17.4	22.3	19.8	15.4	19.5	17.4
2001	19.4	25.6	22.5	17.0	22.5	19.7
2002	23.9	31.3	27.6	18.9	25.7	22.2
2003	27.1	36.5	31.7	19.8	27.6	23.7
2004	31.0	44.3	37.5	20.1	29.0	24.5
2005	35.3	49.4	42.2	19.4	27.6	23.4
2006	33.3	47.2	40.2	17.2	24.0	20.6
2007	30.0	43.4	36.6	15.0	22.1	18.5
2008	28.5	40.3	34.3	14.8	21.7	18.2

Source: Ministry of Education, University and Research data processed by Istat.

As some economists say, Italy is in a vicious circle: low educational output discourages investments in human capital and prevents the country from achieving the standards prevalent in other European countries (Visco I., 2008). On the other hand, the poor quality of the human capital does not foster the capability of the economy to innovate and apply those technologies that, complementary to the human capital, would increase the demand and relative output.

The enterprises require efficient work units that do not depend on the number of years spent in the schools and universities. These units depend on the quality of the educational system and level of human capital viewed as the ability to be, to do and to learn. Those who have accumulated many years of education and have received an education of poor quality cost the enterprises much more. The demand for employment, in situations of informative asymmetry, reacts by giving low salaries to everyone, without valorizing individual talents.

On the other hand, the decision of the families to invest in human capital depends on the reward, in terms of salary, for every extra year of training, regardless of the quality of the human capital thus acquired. Families and students look at the salaries for education and not for unit of efficiency. For this reason, the yield for the investment in human capital appears particularly low to them and they therefore reduce their investments in education.

Improvement in the quality of education absolutely depends on decisive actions taken at the level of the school and university, and on the integration between training and employment. These certainly concern the revision of the incentives to learn, the appreciation and rewarding of merit, a better and continuous evaluation that fosters the mobility of the students⁸ and teachers, and innovations at the level of organization and content.

Italian enterprises do not employ research doctors. On the contrary, in the other, more competitive European countries, the companies use and finance the schools of research doctorates. In Italy, the expectation of research doctors is still only the academic career. Research doctors have increased significantly in recent years, from 4078 in the academic year 2000/2001 to as many as 10,508 in 2007/2008, and the majority, 52.8%, are women (Tab. 3).

Research doctors in Italy are no longer communities of practice where instructors and students were united by the love of knowledge that, from the different specializations, converge in the direction of universal knowledge (Agasisti T., Vittadini G., 2010). Some have been characterized for self-referential schools for the training and co-opting of future university professors, more than as centers of research and the creation of new knowl-

⁸ In 2009, over half the Italian graduates obtained their degree in the same province where they resided: 51% compared with 46% in 2001. All this is particularly true of the three-year degrees, and is less accentuated for the specialist degrees (AlmaLaurea, 2010).

Table 3. Research doctorates in Italy. Years 2000-2008.

Academic years	Total	Variation % on previous year	% women
2000/01	4078	-	50,6
2001/02	4015	-1,5	51,6
2002/03	4254	6,0	51,5
2003/04	6353	49,3	50,8
2004/05	8466	33,3	51,5
2005/06	9604	13,4	51,7
2006/07	10188	6,1	51,3
2007/08	10508	3,1	52,8

Source: Ministry of education, the university and research

edge (Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Policies and Ministry of Education, the University and Research, 2009). The establishment of centers of excellence requires a concentration of resources in a necessarily limited number of schools capable of creating competitive schools of doctorates, with solid international ties.

In other words, we have a gap with other university systems that have already applied reforms when they became aware of not producing excellence or not being able to respond to the needs arising from the demand for training and employment. The choice made by them was to leave the maximum procedural and substantial independence to the different universities, and introducing congruous systems of evaluation. Introducing independence and evaluation means focusing on the importance of the competition among schools, to safeguard the rights of the students and the country as a whole.

INTEGRATION OF TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

Tab. 2 shows that Italian students, especially men, tried to acquire a three-year degree. This trend increased rapidly in the

first part of the decade and then began to slow down. At the same time there was an increase in work experiences carried out during the studies, that the AlmaLaurea 2010 survey reveals coherent with the program of studies undertaken. In 2009, the degree was earned while holding a steady job by just over 10% of graduates. Higher percentages were encountered in the teaching professions (21.5%) and in the social policy sector (19%).

Training internships and temporary jobs increased considerably and involved 54.5% of graduates (AlmaLaurea, 2010).

The data analyzed lead us to believe that the problem of the transition from school to work is the largest problem for young Italians. They try to find a solution with their own individual capacities and the result depends on the social context in which they live and on the factors of convertibility of the resources they possess.

The first priority of Italian students seems to be entering the job market as quickly as possible, without being able to give a medium/long-term judgment of the experience they acquire.

They give extreme importance to the degree obtained and work experiences acquired, without being able to express an opinion and formulate a plan of effective professional growth.

The strategies on employability foresee, on the other hand, programs that alternate study and employment, customized and agreed on by the universities and enterprises (Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Policies and Ministry of Education, the University and Research, 2009).

Apprenticeship at a high level of training is, for example, the trend of the technical and professional training schools, as well as acquisition of a higher degree which can also include the research doctorate. The logic of integration between training and employment means shifting our attention away from the procedures toward the results, so as to avoid waste and the destruction of human capital.

It is necessary, however, to remember that the universities, unlike the primary and secondary schools, do not have the role of merely spreading knowledge, but also of creating it. They must offer teaching of various kinds and, above all, carry out activities of research. Therefore the universities have to face and resolve the problems linked to the type of support to give to the different activities. Can there be specialization and differentiation?

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Sonia Rizzoli*

University placement services: prospects and opportunities

ABSTRACT

This work analyzes the evolution of university placement services in Italy from their emergence to our days, with particular attention given to the objectives, aims, available services and professional competences involved.

Particular attention will be focused on the developments that such services will need to undergo in order to facilitate young people's transition to the workplace, and on the networks that need to be created between the different job market operators, in order to help the planning of university educational courses in line with the needs of the public and private workplace, and in order to create services capable of realizing work systems useful for job placement, such as, for example, higher-level apprenticeship contracts or the certification of job contracts.

If university is a multi-product enterprise capable of producing research and of training young people as high-level human capital, university placement services become a strategic service of the universities for placing on the market one of their outputs, that is, their graduates, in the best possible way.

The enhancement of placement services can be a strategy for the Italian universities that wish to achieve positive results in performance indicators linked to employment and employability.

KEYWORDS: career services, placement, career guidance

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THE EVOLUTION OF JOB PLACEMENT SERVICES IN ITALY

University placement services first appeared in Italy at the beginning of the 1990s as pilot projects within some universities, and by the beginning of the 20th century were established in 90% of all universities.

Placement in the 1990s was primarily a response of the universities to the first signs of difficulties in the job market for new graduates, through services made available to the new graduates and to companies: the former were offered services aimed at helping the definition of a professional project based on personal characteristics and on the individual's expectations, as well as information guidance to help job placement in a context characterized by strong information asymmetries.

Services were also created for companies, with the aim of reducing the costs and times of candidate pre-selections and above all of familiarizing the academic world of students, new graduates and teaching body with organizations that are increasingly complex from the point of view of human resources.

These services became a significant point of reference for the mediation between job search and job demand: the Alma Laurea research shows that throughout the 1990s and in the first years after 2000, job search through university placement services grew significantly in relation to traditional job search methods such as search through personal contacts or through answers to advertisements.

University placement services were started and developed within a practically absent legislative context: our law conferred career guidance functions exclusively to the Regions, which are entrusted with the realization of the so-called "vocational training"; the Treu law, in 1997, acknowledged the universities' role as promoters of vocational training and guidance, thus putting at the disposal of university placement services an important tool for placing young people in the job market.

Since the end of the 1990s, internships have represented for new graduates an important tool in their transition towards the job market, as for the new graduates they are a chance of testing their professional project within the vocational perspective of career guidance, an important opportunity for the acquisition of technical-professional competences, which the university curricula often lacked; at the same time internships represented for companies and organizations a tool for a testing and selection process on the field that reduced the costs and errors of the information asymmetries that characterize the selection process.

Between the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 20th century, the university and job market reforms redefined the tasks and roles of university placement services, bringing the two worlds closer still. These reforms found a European framework in the objectives defined by the Lisbon strategy, that is, that of "...creating the most competitive and dynamic economy in the world, capable of creating new and better jobs", which saw the European Union countries involved in the birth and growth of the society of knowledge that depends, among other things, on the combination of 4 elements: the production of new knowledge, its transmission through education and training, its spread through information and communication technologies, and its use within industrial or service processes.

The university reforms of the Ministerial Decree no. 509/99 and, more recently, no. 270/2004, recognize a fundamental role to vocational training and career guidance, both as a transition tool between the school system and the workplace and as an educational tool for the acquisition of technical professional competences and transversal skills.

Within this perspective, internships become both a tool of active work policy for helping the employability of the people involved and a training activity, characterized by the place in which this learning takes places, that is, the workplace, and by the type of knowledge acquired, the know-how which cannot

easily be acquired in other contexts. These two elements represent, so to speak, "the twin souls of vocational training and career guidance."

THE ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL INTERNSHIP IN THE ITALIAN UNIVERSITIES CONTEXT

However, the university reform started in 1999 emphasized the training value of internships. This resulted, in recent years, in a marked increase in the number of internships undertaken by university students, in spite of the difficulties on the part of companies, university lecturers and universities in managing such training with inadequate means and instruments. In this context it is easy to understand that universities can play a fundamental role in the creation of the economy of knowledge and that in these years they are facing great challenges such as: the increase in the demand for tertiary education, globalization of teaching and research, reorganization of knowledge and, lastly, the need to develop a close and efficient relationship between university and industry.

The didactic autonomy introduced in our country at the end of the nineties pushed the universities to build a dialogue with their own stakeholders and brought about a dialogue with representatives of the local industrial world in order to define course titles, determine training objectives and work out a general framework of training activities.

The university reform introduced in our country in 1999 opened up a very lively debate on this last point since, as far as training is concerned, it acknowledges a definitive role to industry in the planning phase of degree courses, through the creation of a career guidance committee, composed by representatives of the academic world and of industry, whose aim is to evaluate how the professional figures trained within the individual

degree courses match the needs of industry in terms of human resources and professional competences.

A second stage of collaboration between universities and industry, as provided by the Ministerial Decree no. 509/99 and confirmed by the Ministerial Decree no. 207/04, concerns guidance and vocational internships, which represent a further element of renewal of the university system since it is acknowledged that the location of production of knowledge and university training can go beyond the confines of the university classrooms, the training process is in a way externalized towards public and private companies, introducing within universities new learning systems and imposing new models of certification of acquired knowledge.

During the internship, knowledge and learning are created through different means than face-to-face teaching and education, as it takes place through interaction with the industrial context and the practice and application of knowledge, creating the need for an evaluation and certification system different from that of traditional systems.

The universities' promotion of internships contributes to the creation of the society of knowledge, as they encourage behaviors of interaction and exchange with industry that can generate positive results both on didactics, since the evolution of work experiences can show up deficiencies in the training side of the course of studies and lead to a consequent rethinking of the training contents, and on research and technology transfer.

However, it is important to rethink the role that universities must play in such training experiences, which must be more precise at the planning, monitoring and co-evaluation stages.

UNIVERSITIES INTERNSHIPS AND HUMAN CAPITAL THEORY

As we said above, one of the fundamental objectives of universities is that of contributing to the training of knowledge

workers, that is, workers with high levels of instruction of high added value for companies, not easily replaced as they are capable of contributing significantly to the creation and dissemination of new knowledge and therefore of giving life to product or process innovations that allow companies and organizations to keep their competitiveness high and consequently ensure their permanence in the market.

Within this perspective, the learning process in a university study course represents, according to the theory of human capital, an investment by the individual in learning and training, which finds an answer and justification in the future returns that the investment in human capital will be able to generate, that is, the future income from dependent or independent jobs.

Therefore the advantage for an individual undertaking a course of university studies is linked to the chance of getting a job that will guarantee an income level that can repay the costs incurred in education and training.

According to this perspective, universities must be able to ensure for its own students the attainment of adequate levels of investment in human capital for their future placement in the job market and, consequently, an adequate financial return on the investment made in education and training.

This short premise can somehow help us to understand how the tool of internship, within a course of university studies, must be organized and managed in such a way as to represent, in line with the training objectives of the course of studies, a useful training experience for the student, capable of boosting his human capital, and, more generally, of making it possible for universities to train knowledge workers.

We will try to understand what type of knowledge can be acquired in the course of an internship. This element will allow us to establish how to plan an internship and also how to evaluate the acquired knowledge, and after having examined in what forms and modalities the learning process takes place, we will

be able to understand which monitoring tools to adopt, to recognize the types of people involved in the learning process and the characteristics they should have, and finally to identify the characteristics that the structures concerned should have in order to be considered adequate to the fulfillment of the learning process that a degree course wants to achieve.

The theory of human capital makes a distinction between generic human capital and specific human capital, where by generic is meant the general knowledge, acquired at different industrial sectors, which contributes to the worker's general training, which we could define as basic training, distinguishing it from the specific training acquired at a certain industrial sector or group of firms and which is of interest to a limited number of companies. The distinction is made to try to explain the advantage for individuals and companies in investing in training: companies tend to invest, that is, finance specific training, while workers tend to finance their generic training, as it allows them to fit in different job contexts, therefore increasing their job and employability prospects.

The concepts of specific and generic human capital can be raised again within a course of studies to try to answer questions which are often asked about the processes of university reforms: "What must universities teach? What instruction can be referred to external experts or to non university teachers? When can or must universities recognize and certify experiences and competences acquired outside of university classrooms?"

If we analyze the structure of a university course of studies, we see the presence of so-called basic or core teaching that has the objective of providing the student with a good basic education, that is, the elements that serve to form the general human capital of an individual. This knowledge must be such to ensure to an individual the capacity to acquire specific knowledge even in contexts outside of formal learning.

Such general teaching must guarantee the employability of the individual, that is, his capacity to develop a professional path in a context in which professions acquire increasingly richer contents, necessitating therefore the capacity of learning to learn in both formal and informal contexts.

Basic teaching represents the “know what” and “know why” knowledge that is imparted in academic classrooms, strictly linked to the research activities promoted by the lecturers.

The basic knowledge acquired in the university environment is therefore the result of a research activity that differentiates it from the knowledge acquired through primary and secondary instruction and within vocational training experiences.

However, since the objective of a course of university studies is that of preparing a professional figure capable of entering the job market, this person needs to possess specific technical competences.

There are different concepts of competence, taking a definition by Planas (2000), it can be defined as the combination of 3 factors: basic knowledge, technical knowledge and ability. The concept of competence is developed in order to translate the concept of human capital within organizations that tend to evaluate, and therefore to select individuals on the basis of competences required for the performance of a given role. The competence becomes the worker’s characterizing element within the organization in which he works and it is the sum of the training and education he received, of the technical knowledge linked to productive processes and to so-called transversal skills (i.e., ability to work in a team, ability to learn, etc.).

In this context it is obvious that a training internship within a course of studies contributes to the development of an individual’s human capital if it allows him/her to acquire technical knowledge linked to the industrial processes, that is, the know how that means doing something that allows the individual to increase his fund of knowledge and therefore of competences.

For the internship to meet this important objective a few pre-requisites must be present, and they need to be made clear:

- the professional figure that the degree course aims to form;
- the training objectives of the course;
- the training objectives of the internship;
- the presence of appropriate structures;
- shared tools of internship management;
- trained university and company tutors;
- an appropriate evaluation system of the internship.

Table 1. Roles, responsibilities and functions in the management of internships aimed at the acquisition of specific human capital.

Phase	Activity	People involved	Functions given
Preliminary phase	Definition of the training contents of the course of studies involving the definition of the professional figure and the generic and specific training contents	Academic body of course of study Stakeholder Students Families Companies	Competence Guidance
Planning of the training contents of the internship	Description of the times, length and specific activity of the internship within the firm	Companies involved Internship officer or university tutor	Competence Competence
Internship management	It represents the learning phase within the organization	Firm tutor University tutor	Competence Guidance
Evaluation	It represents the evaluation phase of knowledge acquired by each individual student	Firm tutor: qualitative evaluation University tutor Quantitative evaluation	Guidance Competence

Figure 1 shows the management process of the internship, the interaction between the different stages and interdependences: the preliminary phase is strongly determined by the planning ac-

tivity of the individual course of studies, including the guidance work with the people involved, from which follows the educational structure of the course, the educational plan and of course the educational contents of every individual course, including the internship. In the second planning phase, the training ob-

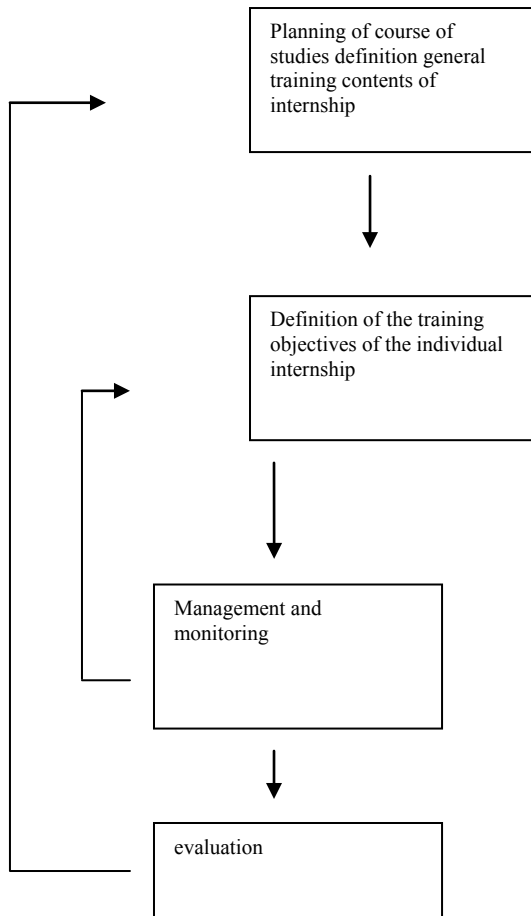


Fig. 1. Management process of internships aimed at the acquisition of specific human capital.

jectives of the internship are modeled on the individual company and individual worker, this phase can represent a test of the actual contents defined in the preliminary phase. In the third phase of internship management the focus is on the transferal of knowledge, learning, and therefore on the process of codification of the tacit knowledge within the organization and the creation of new knowledge. Finally, the last phase of evaluation of the internship produces a qualitative and quantitative certification of the experience which is useful for the student's education curriculum and which can have an effect on the redefinition of the course's training objectives. The evaluation of the internship is one of the most delicate and difficult aspects, in that it must use instruments that have been pre-arranged and planned in reference to the specific typology of the internship and therefore of the course of study. In Italy useful references for this kind of work can be the "Libretto formativo del lavoratore" (Record of training experience) prepared for the evaluation of learning within apprenticeship courses, and the experimental work done within a course of studies in Educational Sciences at La Sapienza University in Rome. At the European level, Cedefop's work of identification of the tools of validation and certification of formal and informal learning represents an excellent reference tool.

JOB PLACEMENT SERVICES AND REFORM OF THE JOB MARKET

The Biagi reform acknowledges for the first time the universities' role as mediation agencies with the capacity of offering career guidance services.

In such context universities effectively become job market operators capable not just of internship placement but of job placement as well. According to the Biagi law, universities can also organize master's degrees within higher-level apprenticeship contracts, and establish commissions for the certification of the

job contracts. In this sense the reform law of the job market has broadened the range of services that each university can offer. In this context, job placement services acquire a threefold function: offering career guidance and internships for students, helping degree courses to define educational objectives linked to the professional prospects required by the job market, developing job and work experience placement services that will meet companies' needs, as well as job meetings and career day to make students familiar with the job market and with professional figures.

As far as services for people are concerned, a majority of the universities organize welcoming, information, career and training services with the aim of encouraging an active job search, analysis of competences and the development of a professional project.

Among the services organized for companies by the universities are the provision of lists of graduates, pre-selection of candidates and monitoring of placements.

The varied range of services provided by university job placement services has led to the development of both structural and human resources structures, and the specificity of workers' roles and functions.

CONCLUSIONS

University job placement services started in the 1990s and in the intervening twenty years they underwent profound changes: from employment services to tools for helping employability. The reforms of the university system and of the job market have allowed a greater dialogue between these two worlds. The Gelmini and Sacconi document of September 2009 represents an important orientation instrument for universities. Drafted within a context of serious difficulties for the general economic system and of

crisis in the university system and the job market, it acknowledges the educational systems' fundamental role in developing transversal competences aimed at guaranteeing "a good life in the active society".

Placement services must become a multi-service center capable of offering career guidance services, in which career guidance activities must become increasingly part of the study curriculum and not just in the post-graduate phase, through new tools and methods aimed at supporting a methodological approach based on life design, that is, on the individual's capacity to guide his/her own career development within society and especially within the context in which he decides to work. Placement services must promote internships, that is, enhance informal learning, according to specific modalities and criteria which allow students to undertake training experiences that match their university studies and at the same time provide high career guidance value. Finally, they must help job placement, working to reduce the times and costs of transition for young new graduates. This necessitates the universities adopting tools and technologies that can meet the needs of a high number of users and companies, but above all working out agreement policies with public and private institutions in their area.

In this context the Europlacement project has created, within its project's website, a pathway for students and graduates to develop individual skills of self-evaluation and self-determination in the job market, and a second pathway for operators in university and non-university placement services to help the creation and planning of career guidance through modern technologies.

Within this context, the use of technologies indissolubly linked to the society of knowledge is valuable not just for its transferal of knowledge but for its development of new knowledge that will serve the individual's full realization throughout his professional life.

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The changing role of Universities in Italy: Placement services

ABSTRACT

The centuries old concept of a university as a self regulating body based on freedom and a priori trust granted by society as a whole is now in crisis due to the European reforms initiated in the nineties. Ambivalence and contradictions in the academic world itself have further accentuated this crisis, a crisis that now questions the role of knowledge in society and a university's very *raison d'être*. Consequently, while there is recognition of the right for autonomy in the pursuit of knowledge there is a perception that society should be able to turn to universities for assistance in solving its basic problems. From this comes a concept of a university, and of knowledge, increasingly ready to respond to the claims of its diverse stakeholders. These external pressures strengthen the links between a university and external economic and social developments.

Placement services are one of the methods used by universities to organize their connections to society and the external environment as a whole and is one that offers added value to the university's internal or external customers. Therefore, this study investigates the placement services in the Italian universities, with the aim to recognize capacity and limitations to reconceptualise their role in regards of Third Mission and manage them towards that.

KEYWORDS: University, Mission, Career Guidance, Placement Services, Employment

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CHANGE IN THE UNIVERSITIES: THE THIRD MISSION

The centuries old concept of a university as a self regulating body based on freedom and a priori trust granted by society as a whole is now in crisis due to the European reforms initiated in the nineties. Ambivalence and contradictions in the academic world itself have further accentuated this crisis, a crisis that now questions the role of knowledge in society and a university's very *raison d'être*. Consequently, while there is recognition of the right for autonomy in the pursuit of knowledge there is a perception that society should be able to turn to universities for assistance in solving its basic problems (Moscati 2008). From this comes a concept of a university, and of knowledge, increasingly ready to respond to the claims of its diverse stakeholders. These external pressures strengthen the links between a university and external economic and social developments. Within today's Knowledge Society knowledge has taken on a competitive role in the economies of several countries as there are demands for ever larger numbers of graduates. Consequently, the traditional rationale for higher education is changing. A model of the university as a 'Knowledge University' is becoming increasingly accepted internationally, the university aims to use its resources to further economic development. Such a model can assist the development of a Knowledge Society where, according to the Regional System of Innovation formulated by Lundvall (1992), a useful tool to identify interactions between society and universities, knowledge is produced, consumed and stored via innovative tools and interface units. Consequently, the role of a university is increasingly defined by its ability to integrate with its environment (Montesinos, López and Mora, 2006).

According to the triple helix model designed by Etzkowitz and Leyedesdorff (1997) the opening up of universities to society and the development of links with business and government has forced the academic world to give consideration to a range

of interest groups (in terms of the control of issues that up to now have been the sole prerogative of the universities) and to acquire a market logic to allow it to remain competitive even in its core competencies of research and education. In the Anglo-Saxon world and Northern Europe the traditional autonomy of universities has encouraged them for some time to develop a network of economic and political contacts at local, national and supranational level thus adding to the 'first' and 'second' university missions (teaching and academic research) additional activities concerned with the generation, use, application and exploitation of knowledge and other university functions outside the academic environment (the so called 'Third Mission') (Molas-Gallart and Castro Martinez, 2007; European Commission, 2003; Molas-Gallart et al, 2002; Polt et al, 2001;). Italian academia, however, has favoured the state and not the market as its principle external contact. In addition, the development of links to the world of work, the opening of dialogues with local institutions and the monetary value of awards, some of the elements required to develop the Third Mission, have helped to underscore the differences between science and arts faculties. Whilst the former have always maintained external contacts, arts faculties have due to the nature of the didactic work undertaken and the individual nature of its research, found it difficult to adapt to urgent external demands. Thus, notwithstanding the fact that the concept of the entrepreneurial university (Clark 1998; Jacob, Lindquist and Hallsmark 2003; Etzkowitz 1983; Mello and Etzkowitz 2008) is becoming more widespread in advanced and developing countries whose attitudes, values and mission are emerging as a common academic format universities do not always succeed in developing, or even want to develop, close integration with the external environment or even with the use of services designed to achieve such a goal.

Placement services are one of the methods used by universities to organize their connections to society and the external en-

vironment as a whole (Montesinos, López, Mora 2006, 3) and is one that offers added value to the university's internal or external customers (Etzkowitz & Klofsten, 2005). Therefore, it should come as no surprise that amongst the indicators mentioned in the 2005 report from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) used to determine the distribution of 75% of its Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) for the period 2006-2008 there are activities that are "not best measured", "including data on students placements, engagement with non commercial organisations and staff dedicated to Third Mission activities" (Molas-Gallart & Castro Martínez 2007, 327).

Nevertheless, it should be stressed that during their evolution universities have always had links with society in general and that these institutions fundamentally considered themselves to be independent and free to chose to make relationships with external stakeholders based on their own ethos (Nedeva, 2007).

"In the neoliberal university such work continues, but has been (re)presented as a functional attribute. This reconceptualisation of the Third Mission from relational to functional has permitted government, through technologies of audit, accountability and performance measurement, to determine the precise nature of universities' functions in this regard and manage them towards those. In particular, universities must now pursue direct, immediate and demonstrable economic utility. As such, the Third Mission creates demands for universities to respond directly to the needs of employers when designing and delivering their educational programmes" (Boden & Neveda 2010, 41).

The adoption of the logic of the Third Mission risks changing the concept of the cultural and social education of the professional elite to a view of education as a set of practical and technical skills and knowledge useful to meet the demands of the knowledge society (Nedeva 2007, 95). The neoliberalisation of universities has thus provided governments with a means of capturing and controlling the discourse of employability with-

out resolving the problem of how to differentiate the quality of different types of higher education study and subsequent careers. "In short, the rapid expansion of higher education and lifelong learning is a symptom of the opportunity trap, not its resolution" (Brown 2003, 154).

THE SUPPORT PROVIDED BY ITALIAN UNIVERSITIES IN THE SEARCH FOR WORK

The 1999 measures (DM 509/1999) to reform the Italian university system contain certain elements aimed at reducing the distance between universities and the world of work. Included here are elements "aimed at helping with the choice of a profession via direct experience of the work sector to which the award can give access by means of careers guidance and training apprenticeships" and through the recognition of knowledge and professional skills acquired in the workplace in the form of university credits.

Progress to date, which can seem slow and late when compared to several other European countries, has been determined by the fact that the Italian university system has only recently had to add to its responsibilities that of an awareness of the workplace. A look at data concerning graduate placement in the workforce during the second half of the nineties shows that private contacts and personal relationships are the main method used when looking for work. Almost 60% of graduates used their contacts with friends, parents and relatives; 50% used formal, non-organised methods (replying to and paying for advertisements); 40% took part in public recruitment exams (formal, organized methods). Particularly in regions in the south of the country requests for work had a low success rate. The main method of matching a request with an offer was via personal relationships; almost 40% found their first job after graduating in this way; 30% found

employment via direct contact with employers; 15% via public recruitment exams and 10% by replying to advertisements. The contribution from universities was almost non-existent, equal to other organised institutions. In the same period European graduates who found work thanks to assistance from their higher education institution, though still a minority, accounted for 10-20% of graduates. What is more, work experience gained during a course, promoted by the universities, was an important criteria considered by employers when deciding who to employ. In Italy, however, far fewer graduates took part in workplace experience schemes than in other countries, very few took 'stages' and apprenticeships, less than 10% found work thanks to direct or indirect help from their university (Rostan 2006, pp. 111-163).

The three surveys carried out by ISTAT in 2000, 2003, 2006 on graduate recruitment indicate that approximately half of the graduates who found work after graduation found it thanks to contacts with the employer – direct contact or contact via relatives and friends. 5% of graduates found work thanks to a communication to an employer from the university, twice this number found work after a 'stage' in a company (Rostan, 2008).

According to research carried out by Alma Laurea on graduates in the workplace (2001-2005), a year after leaving university the main method for graduates of the old system to find work was via contact with employers, through personal initiative and thanks to connections with friends and relations. 10% of graduates found work with the indirect help of universities via 'stages' or other training activities undertaken after graduation (Alma Laurea 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006). The data coming from the cohort of graduates of 2000 (interviewed one, three and five years after graduation) show that as time progresses direct contact with an employer from a personal initiative, whilst remaining the most important method to find work, is used less by graduates whilst the importance of information supplied by relatives and friends remains stable.

The data presented here indicates two principle methods of matching work requests and offers: direct contact between the graduate and employer and contact mediated by a graduate's personal contacts. The role of the university in promoting graduate employment "still appears to be very limited" (Rostan 2008, 164) and not appropriate to graduates' needs.

THE TARDINESS OF UNIVERSITIES: LIMITATIONS AND POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENTS

The workplace is continually changing, globalisation is impacting on individuals' lives resulting in changes to organised structures and a substantial reduction in the workforce; the concept of a career is changing; opportunities to develop a career are diversifying; the workforce is becoming more international. University systems need to respond to these changing circumstances with new models and concepts. The matching model, the most dominant model since its formulation in the first decade of the 20th century (Skill Commission 2008), is no longer valid. The dominant guidance model, built on the principles of social constructivism (Bassot 2006), is based on the notion that knowledge about a career is not simply acquired by people, but is constructed through activity and in interactions with a variety of people (including career professionals, employers, teachers, parents, peers and so on). In this sense, the use of the bridge metaphor to explain the nature of career guidance, is not new to the field of careers work and career education and guidance (Sultana and Watts 2006; Trachtenberg et al. 2002). This metaphor helps to highlight the dialectically opposed tensions between the needs of individuals on one side and the needs of the government and employers on the other and the requirements of individuals to keep pace with change and continue to develop.

Career guidance as a support to the construction of an individual career development programme, linked to education, the acquisition of skills and abilities, to the interests of the individual and in tune with the workplace and professions can no longer be considered as a support for decisions and choices but rather should be seen as a strategy for consultancy, the planning of career paths, professional growth, development plans and professional training. All of this can be expressed in the much abused term 'lifelong learning' which allows guidance to be interpreted as an expert mentor and an awareness of how to manage one's own personal and professional position in the workforce (Tanucci 2009, 13).

The question of how lifelong guidance can prepare young people for an uncertain future remains problematic. As it is problematic to define if and how guidance "has a role to play in ensuring that lifelong learning is embedded into the lives of young people and adults, encouraging them to have a thirst for learning and the achievement of their potential. Each individual, whether at school, college, university or out in the workplace, is now expected to take charge of their own learning and development and engage in a process of lifelong learning. However, whether everyone will be in a position to achieve this is questionable and represents a further move from social responsibility to individual blame" (Bassot 2006, 6).

In such a scenario the university system seems tied to inconsistent ideas and assumptions and unable to meet current demands. What we see is a total lack of awareness in universities of the issues concerning careers guidance and at the same time uncertainty about its role, purpose and responsibilities regarding the new demands for support, advice and action in the sphere of career guidance at tertiary level. This is caused, at least in Italy, by the distance historically between a university and the professions and the workplace, or better, by a lack of interest

in the process of education – in placement into the workplace (Tanucci 2009).

It must be noted, however, that the problem of inadequacy or the total lack of career guidance services in tertiary education is present in several countries. In some countries, careers guidance, an activity that tends not to be professionalised in higher education, is limited at most to the choice of studies to be undertaken: the assumption seems to be that students can manage their own transitions into the labour market without any support. This may have been sustainable when their student body covered a small academic elite, who normally entered a narrow field of work related to their studies. It is much more questionable when the number of students is much larger and more diverse, and when the links between their studies and the fields open to them are much more complex (Watts Sultana 2004, 113).

However, there is unanimous agreement regarding the need to improve career guidance services in tertiary education. This means not only the creation of central careers services but also the provision in the university curriculum of career management courses, opportunities for work experience, and of profiling and portfolio systems. Already in 2004 in a report to policy makers the OECD recognised not only that few career guidance services were available for students in tertiary education but also that a major problem was the lack of professional skills able to meet students' career development and guidance needs. In addition, the reported noted a lack of trained careers counsellors. The following was also noted:

- The focus of existing career services is frequently narrow, often concentrating on personal or study guidance. Little attention is paid to career development and choice, including helping students to develop career management and entrepreneurial skills and to consider taking up self-employment options.

- The specific career guidance needs of particular groups of students – including students in transition from study to employment, students who are dropping out from or changing their courses, mature students returning to study, distance learning students, and international students, for instance – are often not catered for (OECD 2004, 20).

Further problems to be addressed by universities can be added to the above: the sourcing of relevant funding, particularly for public institutions; the assessment of the quality of career services as a part of the general assessment of the quality of tertiary institutions; the possibility of a link between placement services and the roles of teaching staff and links to the content of the academic curriculum; the development of links with external career guidance and employment services, as well as with employers, to ensure that career information and career guidance are appropriate, up-to-date and informed by accurate labour market information; ultimately the closer integration of career guidance into teaching and learning programmes across faculties and departments. Whilst there is no lack of initiatives in Europe to develop assessment criteria for placement services (Hughes & Gratton 2006), one can only note in Italy a reluctance among universities to give consideration to such issues.

It must be noted that the Italian universities are still unsure of the best way to reconcile the often conflicting demands of research and teaching and the varying demands made by their external social partners. It is therefore very problematic to implement true reform with regard to careers guidance services, above all because this would require revision of some of the aspects of the way that the universities as institutions are governed and managed. This is largely due to Italian universities being unable to relate positively to the cultural, social, political and productive organisations of the regions they are located in. The universities, in reality, are refusing to meet society's needs as well as refusing to take on the responsibility to create and impart new

knowledge, both of which are fundamental to individual and regional well-being and general economic development.

Given the profound changes occurring in society surrounding them, the new demand being made on universities is certainly considerable: to play a key role in career guidance they must fundamentally revise their mission and organisational structure. Universities do not always have a clear picture of the requirements of the constantly changing society that surrounds them, or the evolving needs of business and the economy, both key sectors for the development of a country. Universities need to reconcile often contradictory demands: they need to preserve and record the knowledge of a whole society, create innovation, be accountable for vital public funds, carry out scientific research and provide services in a very competitive market. The long timeframe required to transform universities is delaying the moment when it can work with society around it to fulfil its duty to meet the demands of the Knowledge Society.

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Antonia Olmos Alcaraz*¹

*Young people and professional life:
a difficult relationship in the context
of economic crises*

ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to analyze the situation of young people to illustrate their difficulties in dealing with the process of transition into working life, particularly in the current context of economic crisis. Firstly, there is explored the EU proposal, so-called 'renewed Lisbon Strategy'. Secondly, there are presented the implementation of the European recommendations to the Spanish context and the development of some concrete examples associated with the Andalusian reality. Finally, there are provided some tools to facilitate young people's transition into the labour market at the present time.

KEYWORDS: labour market transition, labour supply.

THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE EMPLOYMENT
AND YOUTH POLICIES

For a long time, the European Union has been working on job creation, mainly regarding the most vulnerable groups. The

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Lisbon Strategy is the main instrument the European Commission has developed for working on this issue. Nevertheless, five years after it started, according to the intermediary revision, the assessment made was not completely satisfactory²: the European economy has not reached the expected results as regards productivity and employment. Furthermore, a growing difficulty has been detected concerning disadvantaged groups, of which young people form a part. Consequently, the renewed Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs was built up in 2005. This renewed strategy tries to deal with the problem by increasing investment on R&D and bringing closer the National Action Plans regarding Employment, under the logic of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC)³.

The present situation regarding the projected date for the fulfilment of the Lisbon Strategy objectives is not seen as very optimistic. A supplementary effort must be done in the creation of employment, increasing productivity, sustainable development, the improvement of education and training, the promotion of the use of information and communication technologies (TICs) etc. The main instruments that the European Employment policy has set up for facing this situation are the following: Community programme for employment and solidarity-PROGRESS; EURES: the European Employment and Job Mobility Network; EUROPASS-Serving citizen mobility; Programme for mutual

² Reports of high level groups «Facing the Lisbon Strategy of Growth and Jobs» (November 2004)

³ The open method of coordination (OMC), created as part of employment policy and the Luxembourg process, has been defined as an instrument of the Lisbon strategy (2000). The OMC provides a new framework for cooperation between the Member States, whose national policies can thus be directed towards certain common objectives. Under this intergovernmental method, the Member States are evaluated by one another (peer pressure), with the Commission's role being limited to surveillance. The European Parliament and the Court of Justice play virtually no part in the OMC process (<http://europa.eu/>).

learning in employment; European Employment Observatory (EEO); and Employment Committee⁴. Each of these programmes and actions contains concrete measures concerning young people. Indeed, the White Paper (March 2001) established that questions related to young people would be treated in a transversal way in the framework of other important policies, such as the Employment and Education policies.

It is also important to mention the Programme for Community Action in the Field of Lifelong Learning (the Lifelong Learning Programme – LLP)⁵ as an instrument for boosting the advanced knowledge society, and to obtain more and better opportunities of employment and better social cohesion. To achieve this aim, the LLP has four sub-programs⁶, trying to make it easier to provide for exchanges of people, co-operation and the mobility between education and training institutions and systems within the European countries, and fostering permanent learning in both formal and informal ways.

We can see how the European Strategy regarding Youth focuses on transversality. Indeed, the policy instruments that are to deal with young people's transition from education to working life are Employment, Education and Training policies. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that recently a policy called "EU Youth Strategy 2010 – 2018" has been created as an instrument to work with this target group in an integral way. The aim

⁴ For more information visit: http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/employment_and_social_policy/community_employment_policies/index_es.htm

⁵ See http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/lifelong_learnig/index_es.htm

⁶ Refers to Comenius Programmes (for the levels from kindergarten and primary school to secondary school), Erasmus (for participants attending university), Leonardo da Vinci Programmes (professional formation) and Grundtvig Programmes (paying attention to necessities of education and learning of participation in each manner of education for adults).

of this tool is to create more and equal opportunities for young people in education and in the labour market and to achieve an active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity among young people. This instrument is, at that moment, the closest we have been to having a European-wide youth policy.

THE REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF COMPETENCIES IN SPAIN
AND THE MANAGEMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND YOUTH POLICIES

In Spain, due to its system of regional government and the distribution of power, the authorities who are competent to plan and implement the employment and youth policies are the regional ones. Naturally, they are coordinated at the European level, especially regarding the renewed Lisbon Strategy Plan and the EU Youth Strategy 2010-2018.

Within the framework of these European regulations, and regarding the national policies on employment, the Economic and Social Council differentiates between direct measures concerning the labour market or economical incentives (bonuses for contracting etc.) and measures addressed to the qualitative improvement of adjustment processes between supply and demand (through training, promotion of geographical mobility, improvement of labour information channels etc.).

But what assessment can be made of the implementation of these policies regarding youth? As shown by the alarmingly high current rate of unemployment for young people in Spain, it is clearly necessary to keep on working to safeguard a greater and better transition to professional life. The data offered by Eurostat are not very optimistic: one of the main problems in the present economic crisis is the rate of unemployment among young people, reaching 20% in the 27 EU countries on average, and rising to an alarming 40% in Spain.

Not only have different social actors already been attempting to tackle the issue, but the Spanish Youth Council (Consejo de Juventud de España) has also declared, for instance, that the employment and youth policies implemented in Spain have ignored working through an improvement of capacities and opportunities for young people in view of defining their personal projects. This means that these policies are not achieving their goal of providing the younger segment of the population with skills and abilities needed in the current context for building their own vital itineraries. Another frequent and relevant critique is that, despite the existing declared intention of including these policies in a transversal way through other more general political sectors, this has not worked in fact. On the contrary, the employment and youth policy consists of just a sum of little actions carried out around young people. Finally, it is pointed out that an effective coordination between the different governments involved (European, national, regional and local) is required so as to avoid any duplication of activities and to create a more coherent process.

ANDALUSIA, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EMPLOYMENT

The European Social Found (ESF), as part of the Structural Funds, is the main financial instrument for Employment Policy in Andalusia. Among all the activities co-financed by it, it has given priority to actions addressed to women, people aged 30 and under, those aged 45 or over, immigrants and other disadvantaged groups.

Within the EFS framework, numerous projects have been or are being developed in the region. One of the most relevant projects is the "EQUAL-Andalusia project: Employment strategies" (within the community initiative EQUAL); an experiment that has been in the last ten years a laboratory for designing solu-

tions for the exclusion problems in the labour market. This experience has established a very particular methodology, called Development Associations (AD), where various institutions, i.e., public administration, universities, companies, associations, NGOs, syndicates, etc. work together. The aim of this methodology is working in networks for the dissemination and transfer of results and good practices related to the incorporation to the labour market of groups in vulnerable social situations, among them, young people.

Other experiences implemented in Andalusia that could be highlighted are projects called "HÉRCULES" and "FIDES" (within the Leonardo Da Vinci Programme), whose main objectives are to develop new approaches in the fields of professional education and training and lifelong training. The target group of these projects is young people in vocational education and training. Thanks to these projects, young Andalusian people can enjoy of internships or work experience in other European countries in different companies while also receiving linguistic training.

Given the current unemployment data and the recent European reports, we conclude that keeping working in youth and employment is an urgent matter. For doing so, and while developing new tools for facilitating the transition of young people from university to work, we have to keep in mind that the historical moment in which we live is a moment of social changes with a direct impact in the relationships between school/university and work life.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S TRANSITION FROM EDUCATION
TO PROFESSIONAL LIFE:
TRAINING AND TRANSVERSAL COMPETENCES

According to the latest unemployment rates, reports and recommendations at European level, it is crucial to keep working

on employment policies for young people. For this purpose, when thinking about the necessity of developing new tools for young people to facilitate their transition to the labour market, it has to be taken into account that the time we are living in is a historic moment characterized by a constant change (this is the difference to other periods in history). And this situation of “constant change” has a direct impact on the relationship between the education and working life.

In this context, it is necessary to refer to the labour market in terms of acceleration, turbulence and the universality of its changes (Planas, 2003).

When we stress the acceleration as a characteristic of the current labour market, we want to emphasize the importance of being aware of the changes that are occurring now and that will also occur in the future professional life of a person, because these changes are much more important than the changes in any other period in the past. The first and main question regards the idea of a “permanent job”, something that previously structured and stabilised our lives but does not exist any longer. Furthermore, every worker has a very high probability of changing the kind of job during hi/her career, i.e., a young person who starts his/her career as an administrative assistant, then gets a job as a bank cashier, and later –why not– as an accountant in a messenger company. This sort of career development is a very common practice nowadays. Moreover, even if someone has the opportunity to keep the same job for a long time, there will be permanent and increasing changes that he/she should adopt to: learning a new computer programme, the acquisition of new skills for a new activity, learning a new language to reach a new sector of clients, learning about the organisation and new ways of doing things after staff restructuring, etc. The speed of all these changes is becoming faster and faster, and, because of this, we call this phenomenon acceleration.

As for turbulence, the second characteristic of the current labour market, it means recognizing that these changes are becoming more and more difficult to predict and, as a result, more difficult to deal with. The education system has shown itself unable to predict the expectations of the changing labour market and it can be observed, for example, how the provision of different university degrees, even high school and vocational training qualifications, does not correspond with the demands of the market. How many university graduates are employed in jobs with nothing to do with their studies? This is a direct consequence of the inability of the educational system to predict the changes occurring in the labour market.

The last characteristic, *universality*, is something as simple as admitting that the changes take place at a planetary scale.

This situation generates a certain uncertainty about what kind of competencies should young people and future workers have, and what the training needs will be to provide students with such a labour market as the one defined above. In that regard, the main problem is that companies express themselves depending on the present and near future context and in a changing way, while the educative system acts more fixedly, thinking on the long term. This creates a situation of imbalance between the education of young people and the demands of the labour market.

In this context, another question arises: what kind of education should be provided to young people in order to facilitate success in their integration into professional life? The answer is quite easy to give, but not so easy to implement: young people have to be educated more in skills and competences than in contents.

Nowadays, a university degree is no longer a guarantee of automatically getting a job. Due to the dynamics of social change in which we are living, the old concept of a young person possessing all the skills needed for performing a job does not exist

any more. Regarding the right moment for a student to finish his/her studies, it is highly recommended that they adopt the concept of lifelong learning and recycling formation and training that should last until the end of his/her professional life. Thus, the most important competence that should be offered to this segment of the population is to help them become aware of the fact that the knowledge and skills required by the labour market that have been acquired in formal educative institutions cannot be acquired at one time only and then last forever, but in a progressive way and in different contexts and depending on any changes occurring in the society.

However, how can this be achieved? Earlier on, the concept of “transversal competences” was mentioned, referring to skills, abilities, capacities, tools and educative instruments that are common to a large number of jobs (and this is the reason of their utility). As mentioned above, the idea of a “permanent job” for the whole of one’s life is relative nowadays. Some professions have almost disappeared (especially those related to manual labour), and others are transforming their contents. In this situation, the most important thing is that young people acquire competences which are useful in various kinds of profession, e.g., basic knowledge about informatics, languages and “human competences”, i.e., ability to communicate, capacity to learn etc., all of which are competencies that are unlikely to be acquired by “machines”. For this purpose, it would be necessary to keep promoting and acknowledging non-formal education and guaranteeing a high quality of the informal learning through initiatives and projects such as those mentioned above⁷, all for reaching the recommendations and advice provided by both the original and the re-launched Lisbon Strategy.

⁷ EQUAL-Andalucía: Estrategias para el Empleo, HÉRCULES, FIDES.

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*Transition from University
to the Labour Market –
Employment Situation
of Graduates in Austria¹*

ABSTRACT

At first we present some general facts that describe the present situation of graduates in Austria. In general one can state that transition from University to the labour market has become more complicated within the last 20 years. Afterwards the most important trends are being discussed as for example that the need for higher qualifications and life long learning is increasing. Furthermore we describe the most relevant strengths, weaknesses as well as chances and threats. Despite all problems graduates have better chances on the labour market than other groups though there has to be distinguished between different fields of study. Finally the current situation is illustrated by relevant indicators.

KEYWORDS: university, college, graduates, transition, labour market, qualifications, life long learning, strengths, weaknesses, chances, threats, indicators.

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SOME GENERAL FACTS

In general, one can state that transition from University to the labour market has become more complicated within the last 20 years. Beside others, one reason for this is that the public sector is no longer the most important employer for graduates. In fact, the private sector is becoming more and more important, and, therefore, the focus at university should no longer be on scientific but on vocational issues.

One central fact is that, although career entry starts already while studying (placements, jobs), the full career entry lasts longer and career development is seldom straightforward. In Austria, the average time to find a job is 1,9months (Universitätsbericht, 2008). Generally, one can state that there have been the following changes in the development of careers:

- More flexibility
- Short-term cycles of acquired knowledge instead of long-range life cycles
- Ongoing pressure to succeed
- Increasing importance of networking.

Additionally, employer's expectations have changed: skills and competences not acquired at University are becoming more and more important and the competition between graduates is no longer only local but has become international.

The risk of unemployment for graduates still is significantly lower compared to the other groups in the labour force (1.8%; total unemployment rate: 5.8%) but the duration of unemployment of graduates is longer compared with the entire labour force (the average period of unemployment of graduates in 2006 was 112 days while that of the entire labour force was 92). Moreover, there is a problem of hidden unemployment: graduates who have finished University and not worked (with an official contract) during their studies do not appear in the statistics. Graduates are not fully aware of possibly being unemployed

after having finished their studies; and not informed about job prospects sufficiently well.

TRENDS

One trend for graduates is that there is a general need for the labour force to have higher qualifications. Life-long learning is a necessity due to constant changes in the labour market and job assignments have become broader despite graduation due to broad and not clearly defined qualifications acquired in a number of studies (e.g. humanities, social sciences) and multi-faceted requirements of the labour market.

Another important trend is that problems in transition do not necessarily result in unemployment owing to broad-ranging education, greater flexibility of graduates and therefore more opportunities of bridging gaps. Since 2002, unemployment has, nevertheless, become a matter of concern also for graduates.

It is also worth mentioning that the number of atypical labour contracts has increased (also the number of unsalaried placements). This phenomenon is not completely new for graduates but it was previously restricted to certain faculties and fields of study, e.g. journalism and architecture. Against this background, self-management competences are becoming more and more important. The increase of nominally [i.e. in name only] independent contractors is mainly restricted to jobs in the media, cultural and non-profit sectors.

Finally, there is an increase in employment opportunities on account of lack of graduates. The expansion of academic education in the seventies has nearly come to a standstill. The amount of first-year students is in a state of stagnation or has even declined. Beside this, the percentage of graduates in Austria is low. Therefore, a shortfall of academic labour force may be expected. According to forecasts, there might be an increase in the number

of labour contracts from 285,400 in 2004 up to 327,500 in 2010 at the academic level (Huber, Peter et al., 2006).

SWOT ANALYSIS

The following SWOT analysis comprises the data obtained from indicators and from Chapters 1-2 of this paper. Two statements are cited both as an opportunity and as a threat:

- Competition is longer only local but has become international: for those who do not want to move, it is a threat; for those who are more mobile and want to move, it is an opportunity.
- The graduate’s career entry starts already while studying, which might be regarded as a chance to have a job already before the final degree; but also as an obstacle for finishing one’s studies (become a drop out).

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problems in transition do not necessarily result in unemployment • Broad-ranging education • Greater flexibility • More opportunities of bridging gaps • Ability for life-long learning • Intellectual capacity • Majority have a full-time job • 60% of graduates still had the same job they had started their careers with; 80% had a regular, indefinite job. • Unemployment rate for graduates is low: 1.8% (total unemployment rate: 5.8%) 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduates’ awareness of possibly being unemployed after having finished their studies is low • Graduates are not adequately informed about job prospects • Not enough practical experience • No realistic view on life and the labour market • Academic point of view to life on the labour market • Not aware of competencies that can be acquired outside University
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Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ The private sector is becoming more and more important ✦ Career entry starts already while one is still studying ✦ Becoming aware of the importance of networking ✦ Short-term cycles of acquired knowledge instead of long-range life cycles (a chance for restarting and/or changing one's career) ✦ Skills and competences that are not acquired at University are becoming more and more important ✦ Risk of unemployment for graduates is significantly lower compared to other groups of the labour force ✦ Increasing employment opportunities due to a lack of graduates ✦ General need for a more highly qualified labour force ✦ Short time to find a job after graduation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Transition from study to work has become more complicated ✦ The public sector is no longer important as an employer ✦ Career entry lasts longer; career development is seldom straightforward ✦ Career entry starts already while studying ✦ Ongoing pressure to succeed ✦ The duration of unemployment for graduates is longer when compared with the entire labour force ✦ Hidden unemployment ✦ Increase in atypical labour contracts (five years after graduation, 11% of graduates have more than one part time job, 21% only have temporary contracts and 15% are self-employed or are in a similarly precarious situation) ✦ The average period of unemployment for graduates was 112 days (92 for the entire labour force)

Fig. 1. SWOT Analyses.

SOME ADDITIONAL FACTS AND FIGURES

In the following we present some figures that illustrate the situation of graduates in the Austrian labour market.

According to the study quoted above, 60% of graduates held the same job as at they had started with; 80% had a regular, indefinite job. Approximately 30% had been unemployed at least once; it took them up to 6 months to find a new job. For 63%, the importance of their study for job entry was high. For 53%, their study was important for personal development; there is one outlier: only 35% of pharmacists found their studies important. The average period of unemployment of graduates was 112 days

Labour market situation of graduates 5 years after final degree (in percentage) ²											
	Pedagogic, teaching degree	Culture	Social Sciences	Economics	Law	Natural sciences	Engineering (incl. architecture/informatics)	Life sciences	Medical studies	Pharmacy	Total
One full time job	76	61	65	82	81	79	83	70	79	75	77
More than one part time job	12	19	20	8	4	5	9	13	10	14	11
Unemployed, jobless, not active	12	20	15	9	15	16	8	17	10	11	13
Regular, indefinite job	65	73	82	93	95	70	90	89	29	74	79
Temporary job	35	27	18	7	5	30	10	11	71	26	21
Public sector	68	38	39	16	52	43	17	28	81	37	38
Non-profit	18	15	25	5	9	6	6	11	2	0	10
Profit	12	45	36	78	49	50	74	61	17	63	51
Entrepreneur	8	27	22	12	4	5	13	34	15	20	14
Employed	92	73	78	88	96	95	87	66	85	80	86
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Fig. 2. Labour market situation of graduates 5 years after final degree.

² (Guggenberger, Helmut et al., 2008).

Importance of the field of study (in percentage) ³											
	Pedagogic, teaching degree	Culture	Social Sciences	Economics	Law	Natural sciences	Engineering (incl. architecture/informatics)	Life sciences	Medical studies	Pharmacy	Total
For career entry	52	49	48	70	73	67	74	54	51	73	62
For task fulfilment in job	52	46	41	56	60	52	58	47	43	81	53
For personal development	83	84	83	77	75	73	77	56	62	35	75
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Fig. 3. Importance of the field of study (Question: to what extent was your study important; possible answers from 1 "very important" to 5 "no importance"; Questioning took place 5 years after final degree)¹.

³ (Guggenberger, Helmut et al., 2008).

(entire labour force: 92) The unemployment rate for graduates was 1.8% (total unemployment rate: 5.8%).

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Career Path to Success – Enhancers and Obstacles

ABSTRACT

Each project partner conducted research, statistical and literature based, into new graduates' prospects of finding work after their studies, and then, through SWOT analysis, extricated factors improving or obstructing chances of finding work. The following contributing factors were extracted by Tellus Group. Firstly, the recession has reduced job opportunities, while there have been changes in the job and career patterns. The degree classification and the subject studied also seem to have an effect on graduates' prospects, as do the factors of region and sex. Furthermore, matching employers' requirements on degree content emerged as a significant factor. Finally, UK remedies for beating the effect of the recent recession are offered.

KEYWORDS: labour market transition, labour supply

In the course of this undertaking, each of the project partners conducted research, both a statistical investigation and a literature review, into the prospects of graduates finding work after they finish their studies, and then, through a SWOT analysis, extricated factors that might either improve or obstruct their chances of finding a job. In the research done by Tellus Group Ltd., the following contributing factors were extracted.

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THE DREADED RECESSION

First of all, the recent recession has raised fears of higher unemployment rates for the newly-graduated with fewer jobs being created and the existing ones reduced. Brown (2009) cites figures the Office of National Statistics published in May 2009, which show that the numbers for under-25s in Britain claiming Job Seekers Allowance had almost doubled from 246,900 in April 2008 to more than 450,000. He also states that, according to a recent survey by Advantage West Midlands, a regional development agency, 58 per cent of the region's undergraduates (192,890 students at nine universities and three university colleges) worry about finding employment because of the recession, while merely 14 per cent feel certain of finding a graduate-level job within the first three months of completing their degree course. This could also increase the numbers of graduates continuing studying to ride out the recession while also improving their job-hunting prospects, which, naturally, can be seen as a positive development as well. As witnessed by Brown's article in the *Telegraph*, in which he reports that an increasing number of students, approximately 14 per cent at the time of the publication of the article, go on to do postgraduate studies, many probably thus aiming to postpone their entry into the labour market, which, with the increasing numbers of new students, puts even more pressure on the resources universities have and, so it is argued, possibly devalues the degrees granted.

CHANGES IN THE JOB AND CAREER

Secondly, as claimed by Kerka (1991), changes in the job and career are becoming increasingly common and that cyclical patterns are replacing the linear career development models. More-

over, she also states that criticism has also been levelled on because their relevance to women and different cultural groups.

In addition, Davis (2009) reports that, according to a recent report on a study called *Dream Jobs*, 60% of the labour force drift away from what they aspired to early on in their careers, a phenomenon called 'career drift', turning away from their ambitions in favour of more immediate roles. Also Langenberg (2001) states that short-term contracts can cause pressures that increase the difficulties for women trying to combine a family with a career.

Furthermore, Martin (2007) writes in her article in the Guardian newspaper that Training Development Agency for Schools found in their survey that 25% of graduates aged 25-30 are finding it difficult to find a suitable career, with 58% employed in a job they strongly dislike. She also adds that 25% of those interviewed stated that they had chosen a 'quick fix' job and were now worried that their peers were leaving them behind in career advancement, while 14.3% claimed they had 'fallen into their current job'. Also, she reports, one in four believed they would become more and more unemployable the longer they kept waiting for the perfect job. Moreover,

According to Guest et al. (as reviewed in Flexibility website, 2010), fixed term contracts in the UK increased by 25% and temporary work by 30% between 1992-1996. This continuing trend of flexible forms of employment is supported by the government, the CBI, all the major political parties, the European Commission and most academics and journalists in the field.

However, the authors claim that the use of such contracts may have a negative impact, although not a direct one, on the psychological contract, the "set of unwritten reciprocal expectations between the individual employee and the organisation", as, psychologically, it is in opposition to what most workers want: job security, or a "positive psychological contract". In addition, it is also argued in the review that this kind of contracts

are creating a form of contract chaos, evidenced in a great number of different contracts utilized by enterprises, leading to low perceptions of fairness and low trust, e.g., permanent staff as well as non-permanent becoming demotivated when colleagues are enjoying better pay and conditions for doing the same job.

On the other hand, by working on a variety of limited term contracts in a variety of employment situations, workers can be seen to gain wider experience, improve their skills and “employability” and develop a sharper commercial “edge”.

EFFECT OF DEGREE CLASSIFICATION AND THE SUBJECT STUDIED

Thirdly, based on statistics provided by Higher Education Statistics Agency Ltd (1) the classification of the degree (e.g. top, medium, low grade) affects the holder’s prospects of finding a job as the rate of unemployment for those with lower classifications appear to be significantly higher than for those with the top level degrees, the difference in percentage being about 7% between the top and the bottom. Connected to this, also based on statistics provided by Higher Education Statistics Agency Ltd (2), the subject of the degree also seems to affect employability. For example, those with degrees in medicine, veterinary sciences and other related subjects enjoyed nearly 100% employability, and the figures for education, law and architecture were 96%+, while at the end of the scale they were only about 90% (computer science, creative arts and design, mass communication and documentation). Also, in this context, most graduates (approx. 80%) seem to be employed in the following four categories: associate professional and technical occupations (30%), professional occupations (27%), administrative and secretarial (12%) and sales and customer service (11%). (Higher Education Statistics Agency Ltd (3))

REGIONAL EFFECT

The fourth factor extracted from the data by Higher Education Statistics Agency Ltd (4) regards the region where the degree was studied and it was found that the employment rates for Northern Ireland (95.3%), Scotland (95.1%) and Wales (93.9%) were higher than those for England (93.6%). or even the national average for the UK (93.8%).

MALE VS. FEMALE

Next, the fifth issue is the difference in unemployment between female and male graduates. According to the data obtained from official statistics [Higher Education Statistics Agency Ltd (5)], women appear – surprisingly – to be in a better position when finding a job after graduation than men: 5.2/5.1% and 8.5/8.1% in 2004/5 and 2005/6, respectively.

MATCHING EMPLOYERS' REQUIREMENTS

Sixth, having recognised the need for suiting the employers' requirements from graduates and what is taught at university, the Scottish Funding Council are trying to find a system of tertiary education where such needs can be fulfilled. The need of this is also echoed by Rikki Hunt, a businessman and the chairman of the Swindon Strategic Economic Partnership (quoted in Brown, 2009), who states that, regarding education, the right skills and providers need to be brokered and commissioned to make sure those finishing their studies possess the skills employers are looking for.

RECESSION REMEDIES

The seventh and final factor elucidated was that the UK government has initiated a new scheme to improve the situation in the job market for graduates caused by the recent recession, named 'Graduate Talent Pool', which aims to support 5,000 new internships building on the 2,000 already achieved through HE-FCE's Economic Challenge Investment Fund. This scheme will be operated alongside the following graduate opportunities: 14,000 post-graduate places to be met by universities and supported by Career Development Loans (30,000 to be made available in 2009); 250 short-term placements through Mini Knowledge Transfer partnerships (increased to 500 in 2010/11); and thousands of volunteering options through 'V' (an organisation aimed at young people between 16 and 25 years of age) and other voluntary organisations.

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Students' Career Path Support at the Veliko Turnovo University

ABSTRACT

When faced with financial and economic crisis the labor market in Bulgaria as a whole, as well as individually in the different regions, tends to undergo certain changes. Unemployment rates gradually increase and labor force segments shift parameters.

In the end of 2008 in the district of Veliko Tarnovo for example, the registered unemployed individuals were 9,343 and the "youth unemployment" – 1,365 individuals, at an unemployment rate of 6,90%.

Ratios between the number of registered university students actively searching for a job and the number of graduates who found employment through participation in student programs, temporary or regular jobs – 47,0 %.

This result is not good and something has to be done in order to change the current situation. That's why the Academician staff at the Veliko Turnovo University (VTU) is working for supporting students in their career path.

The main tools and approaches for supporting students in successful placement at VTU are:

1. University Career Center, which was established in 1995.
2. Involving students in National projects for successful placement in collaboration with industry.
3. Involving students in European level projects motivating and supporting them being students to start their own business.

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4. the European level projects, motivating and supporting students to start their own business.

KEYWORDS: career, students, placement, business, unemployment.

When faced with the latest financial and economic crisis, the labour market in Bulgaria as a whole, as well as individually in the different regions, has been experiencing certain changes: gradually increasing unemployment rates and shifting parameters for labour force segments.

At the end of year 2008, the number of registered, unemployed graduates was 20,185, compared to 46,585 in 2000; and the level of the so-called "youth unemployment" (those under 29 years of age) reached 39,291 people at the end of year 2008; in 2000, 187,792 people were without a job, with the national unemployment rate at 5.60 %. According to national and regional surveys, despite the fact that, compared to year 2000, the national unemployment rate has decreased several fold, today this aspect of life ranks third among people's priorities.

At the end of year 2008, in the district of Veliko Turnovo, there were 9,343 registered, unemployed individuals and, regarding "youth unemployment", 1,365 individuals, with an unemployment rate of 6.90 %.

National as well as regional, i.e. the Veliko Turnovo district, labour force surveys were used in the preparation of this report. Data from empirical sociological research done by employees of the Labor office in Veliko Turnovo, as well as relevant national surveys, were also implemented.

Additionally, survey data regarding graduate gathered between 2006 and 2008 by the job placement office at the St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Turnovo (VTU) were also included and shown below.

A Students registered at the university:

Total number of registered university students	4,049
Registered university students actively searching for a job	744
Obligatory registration – first year university students	3,305

B Registered employers – companies, organizations and institutions:

Total number of registered employers	227
Offers made by registered employers regarding job or internship openings	864

C Graduates of St. Cyril and st. Methodius University of Veliko Turnovo who had found employment:

Total number of such graduates	361
Faculty of philology	232
Faculty of economics	45
Faculty of pedagogy	32
Faculty of philosophy	31
Faculty of history and law	16
Faculty of Greek orthodox theology	5

D Preferred majors:

Computer Science, Economics, Tourism, Management, Law, Psychology, Applied Linguistics.

E The ratio between the number of registered university students actively searching for a job and the number of graduates who found employment through participation in student programs, temporary or regular jobs is 47,0 %.

This result is not good and something has to be done in order to change the current situation.

Consequently, the academic staff at the Veliko Turnovo University are working (hard) to support students in their career path.

The main tools for improving the situation at the VTU are:

5. University Carrier Centre.
6. Involvement of students in different kinds of projects:
 - 2a. Projects for successful placement in the field of computer science in collaboration with IT companies.
 - 2b. Projects which motivate and support students to have an earlier start with their own business.

VELIKO TURNOVO UNIVERSITY CARRIER CENTER

Veliko Turnovo University Carrier Center was founded in 2005.

The mission of the Carrier Center has several goals. On the one hand, it is aimed to ensure businesses are provided with specialists, and, on the other hand, to reduce the rate of unemployment among young people. It endeavors to keep up with trends in the labor market in Bulgaria and periodically informs the university authorities on such processes.

By doing so, it is helping the university to improve the range and quality of specialties and curriculum in order to cater for economic and industrial requirements adequately.

The main functions of Carrier Center are:

- connecting students with employers;
- offering labour market services to students:
 - looking for and offering work placements or permanent positions;
 - providing professional orientation;
 - creating useful contacts with employers and representatives from different domains and companies;

- offering information on unoccupied placements and positions;
- organizing presentations and seminars with different companies;
- helping students start their placement, work or business, and
- organising carrier weeks etc.

INVOLVING STUDENTS IN PROJECTS FOR SUCCESSFUL PLACEMENT

Student placement in the field of computer science in collaboration with IT companies.

Students are encouraged to obtain practical skills with the support of IT companies using modern, licensed software. One such project is *“Professional students’ placement in the field of Informatics and Computer science”, financed by European Social Fund 2007-2013, Operating Program “Developing of Human Resources”*.

The main goals of the project are:

- improving quality of students’ knowledge and skills by means of working in real, professional environment, and
- reaching their readiness for quick involvement in IT-based business and thus reducing the gap between universities and companies.

Fifty students are taking part in the project and they are divided in three groups according to these modules: Information System Design, Computer Based Learning and Mathematical Modelling. At the beginning of the project, training sessions will be provided by consultants from IT companies. During the training, students are to obtain new knowledge and practical skills in the three different IT areas mentioned above. After obtaining the required knowledge, students are given concrete and specific practical tasks for developing different kinds of IT project under the guidance of the consultants and univer-

sity teachers. They have to realize their projects working in a team. They will also prepare a presentation and papers for a students' scientific conference. Thus, they will receive additional skills for elaboration presentations and presenting the results to an audience.

STUDENT STARTER IN BUSINESS

The name of the project is "From student to entrepreneur by transformation of mini companies into real business" (Student Starter). The main aim of the project is to stimulate and support students to start their own business during the education stage and to continue this business after graduation. This project was in frame of Leonardo da Vinci program of the European Commission.

The partnership is multifunctional and covers European organisations, national colleges and universities and private entrepreneurs. The partners and participating countries are: Edinburgh University Settlement in Scotland (UK); CECE in Madrid, Spain; Veliko Turnovo University, Bulgaria; Regional Development Agency in Plovdiv, Bulgaria; Syntra Midden Vlaanderen in Belgium; The Netherlands Landstede College in Harderwijk; European Educative Projects in Vught (EEP, coordinator); Breda University of Applied Sciences (NHTV), and AOC Oost in Doetinchem.

The European umbrella organisations EfVET (a pan-European network of providers of technical and vocational education and training in all European countries) and JADE (a student-run, pan-European network representing more than 20 000 young entrepreneurs in 225 local non-profit organisations, called Junior Enterprises) take care of the valorisation and dissemination of the results to their members and, together with the partners, to other interested bodies.

Main general results:

- description of entrepreneurs' professional competence profile;
- coaching and guiding starters as well as students in the role of young entrepreneurs;
- provision of materials to the partners and other interested organisations;
- stimulation of cooperation and exchange of experiences at the local level among the young starters.

During the life of the project, a guide book for the students was produced. It contains different information about starting and organizing one's own business, with some techniques for checking and evaluating one's own capabilities and suitability and a few examples of good practices.

Almost one hundred students from different partner countries were recruited. The categories of starters and their distribution in various domains are as follows:

ICT / Web design, automation	7 starters
Food & beverages	9 starters
Industry	8 starters
Education and training	7 starters
Sport & Entertainment	7 starters
Marketing and PR	6 starters
Events & Services	19 starters
Gardening & Agriculture	8 starters
Other	17 starters

About 10 student starters from Veliko Turnovo University were involved in these activities. The main bottleneck which was met was that, although the aims were clear and the students and colleges enthusiastic, there were huge differences that limited the start-up of a business. The main remarks related are:

- At all levels, improvement in the entrepreneurial attitude of the participants could be observed;
- Young students may experience problems to get registered;
- The reasons for students to quit the training were:
 - Financial problems/investments;
 - Difficulties in combining full time education and establishing a business.

Colleges may have problems with their government because a person cannot be “registered as student while running a business”.

CONCLUSION

The investigation of the labour market in Bulgaria and transition from university to the labour market determines the following basic threats:

- insufficient work experience is one of the main reasons why young people are more likely to become unemployed in comparison to the previous generations. This is used by employers as a method to discharge “beginners” who are still in the process of adapting to the work environment;
- slower pace of individual socialization, resulting in tension between generations and eventually provoking conflicts. A multiplication of the effect of youth unemployment is evident;
- Employers’ practical readiness, capabilities and initiative to stimulate the formation of a genuine labour market are unsatisfactory at best; and
- a relatively low percentage of graduates finding employment relevant to their chosen field of education.

In the authors’ opinion, one of the ways to avoid these threats is student participation in different projects, aimed at their placement, as well as being aware and capable of creating

a Europass portfolio (Europass Curriculum Vitae, Europass Language Passport, Europass Mobility, Europass Certificate Supplement and Europass Diploma Supplement). This will make them ready to meet today's challenges not only in Bulgaria but also in the rest of Europe.

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Placement difficulties faced by young female engineers in Hungary

ABSTRACT

This article presents the situation of young female graduates in the field of engineering, showing Hungarian trends and presenting experiences of a few graduates in mechanical engineering. In the Hungarian labour market for young graduates, the separation of preferences in the choice of profession by gender can be easily observed. While men generally choose the fields of technology, IT, sales, logistics and production, women tend to prefer marketing, human resources, sales, finance, and media-related jobs.

For a young female graduate at the present time, getting a better-paid job with prospects of a rising career is already often equal to giving up the dream of raising a big family, early child-bearing. Moreover they often also suffer from other forms of gender-specific discrimination, for example in situations where interviewers are not embarrassed to ask so-called “forbidden” questions at job interviews.

The Best Workplace for Women Award has been given in three categories annually since 2007 for companies and institutions which best fulfil the requirements of fair work conditions, career opportunities, physical and mental health preservation, improvement of skills, and provision of opportunities to co-ordinate work and private life.

The interviews with participants of Europlacement project display rather depressing picture of the job seeking situation for graduates in the countries

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involved. In Hungary, graduates in the field of biomedical engineering were faced with preference of men, the requirement of at least two-year professional experience in the narrow field of the desired jobs, or they were offered positions which did not suit their formation at all (e.g., sales of medical equipment) beside very low salaries. Though there remain occasional or second jobs, and further lack of experience so the vicious circle is started.

KEYWORDS: career starting, gender-specific difficulties

INTRODUCTION

Historically, there a natural division of labour has formed between men and women: men take the instrumental roles (earning of living), and women the expressive ones, emotional support and socialization, as stated by T. Parsons [3]. According to conflict theories, oppression of women by men is the most general relationship of inequality in the history of mankind. This seemingly unchanged inequality also occurs in the labour market, which, for young women graduates, can result in quite serious consequences.

In modern the society, a particular age, so-called post-adolescence is wedged between adolescence and adulthood. This age is meaningful for young women, as, besides searching for a job, mate choosing pursuits, also very important to them, tend to concentrate on this age.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS AND TRENDS IN THE SITUATION OF WOMEN IN THE HUNGARIAN LABOUR MARKET

In the dictatorial communist system, employment of women was nearly total (ages 15-54). In 1984, 73,8% of them were economically active, 10,9% inactive, 8,3% students and 7% dependents. After the transition which started in 1990, the proportion of

economically active women has dropped to 69.4% and 6.3% are inactive (pensioners), 9% on child benefits and 9.6% students. Women represent a majority among white collar workers, trade, and services, while a minority in the building industry, transport and agriculture. Among women, there are few skilled workers but far more semi-skilled workers [1].

In the field of education and training, women form a great majority in teacher-oriented education and a smaller majority in education oriented towards economics and law. Men represent a great majority in technical education and a smaller one in medical education.

Regarding full-time net earnings of women, they are consistently 15-20% lower than those of men every time and almost in every profession. Women's salaries are lower than men's in every sector. This is enforced with an obsolete but still highly active false assumption: men fill in positions of power needing bravery, while women fill in those connected with subjection, bringing about soft emotions [2].

As for per capita income of women in the age group 20-29, it is higher than that of the 30-39 age group, because generally they are still not married or not undertaking bringing up children. The most serious financial problem in a young adult's life is accommodation: to get a flat more than half of young married people between 20 and 34 receive financial help from their parents. Based on post-adolescence research in Hungary, young people aged 18-29 often live together with parents until they get their own flat.

Governing political forces have a very strong effect on the labour force through family policy. Family support forms, i.e., child benefit, maternity benefit and that for those aged 3 or below (in case of 3 or more children, until the age of 8) strongly influence the job searching behaviour of young women. Child bearing only means further support provided the mother has already been two years in employment. This condition has a se-

rious effect on the bargaining power of young female graduates in labour market deals. While, for example, in Italy, part-time employment of women is at 34%, in Hungary, it is only a sixth of that, resulting in one of the lowest rates in Europe.

From the tendencies in the last twenty years, it can be pointed out that radical changes have taken place concerning the employment of both genders: the employment rate for men has reduced by 22.8% and that for women by 21.9%, as shown in Figure 1 and Table 1 below.

Between 1992 and 1997, among both men and women, the economic activity of the age group 20-24 reduced the most, while there has been a considerable decrease among teenagers as well. Although, among women, the greatest decrease affected young adults aged 25-29 and those aged 30-39, while, among men, the older age groups (40-54 and 55-59) were impacted on. Similar to the activity of women decreasing in the period of economic transition, the activity gap between the genders has also widened [4, 5].

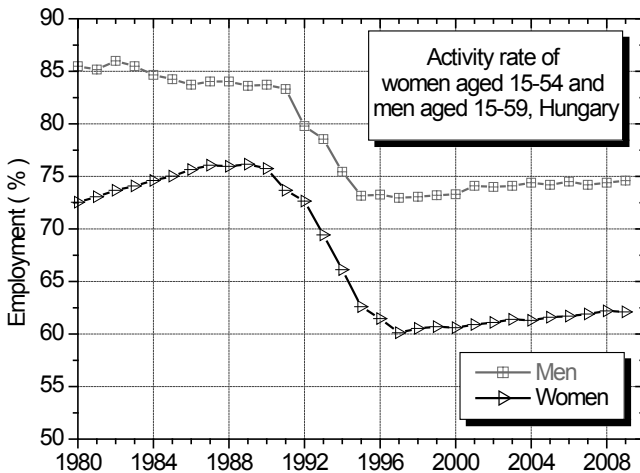


Fig. 1. Changes in activity rate of theoretically active population.

The expansion of education played a major role in the decrease in the economic activity of young people in the '90s. The changed conditions in the labour market motivated a larger proportion of them to obtain a secondary or higher qualification in order to increase their chances of finding work. The influence of the expenditure of education is not negligible concerning the economic activity of the total working age population either: rising involvement in education can be seen as having been the major factor accounting for this age group's decrease in activity between 1992 and 1998.

Table 1. Employment rate statistics showing the remain of the gap between men's and women's data.

Age	2000			2007		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
15-24	37,3	29,7	33,5	24,2	17,8	21,0
25-54	79,2	66,9	73,0	81,3	68,0	74,6
55-64	33,2	13,3	22,2	41,6	26,3	33,1
15-64	62,7	49,6	56,0	64,0	50,9	57,3
Gap		-13,1			-13,1	

MAIN RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS OBTAINED FROM THE 2-ND REPORT OF THE EUROPLACEMENT PROJECT

For the purposes of demonstrating the most up-to-date situation, certain results and conclusions from the previous research work carried out in order to prepare Report 2 for the Europlacement project will be presented here. As regards employment rates, it is clear that women's rates are lower in every age group. Based on the data, it can be concluded, firstly, that a large proportion of the youngest age group is still studying, and secondly, that those who have not acquired a degree are much worse off trying to obtain a job. Neither is there much surprise in the

fact that women without a higher education are not especially much respected in the job market, although women's statistics are also similar regarding graduates. Thus, it can be stated that the women's situation is worse even with one or more degrees obtained. This hypothesis is also supported by the results below.

There is a significant difference in graduates' earnings with regard to the type of higher education institution: for university graduates, the average salary was higher by 45% than for that for high-school graduates. The average salary for graduates in jobs requiring a university degree was 325,000 HUF per month (total average) and 414,000 HUF in the private sector in 2007. Men's salaries are also significantly higher than those of women. In 2008, in the budgetary sector, the men's average salary was 458,000 HUF while that for women was 361,000 HUF. The difference of nearly 100,000 HUF is shocking, bearing in mind that the minimum wages in Hungary is currently 73,500 HUF.

Regarding school-leavers' salaries, at the top of the list of professions is lead informatics (270,000 HUF), followed by chemical and electric engineers. The lowest paid professions, even after 2 two years' employment, are touristic services and agricultural engineering. This is disadvantageous for women again as the tourist industry is traditionally held an ideal sector for improving women's employment. In the latter two sectors, the average salary after 2 years' employment does not exceed 200,000 HUF, which creates a disadvantageous circumstance for these young women to start a family.

GENERAL DIFFICULTIES FACED BY YOUNG GRADUATE WOMEN AND SOME GOOD EXAMPLES

For a young graduated woman, there are usually two main perspectives: getting a better-paid job with rising career prospects or sacrificing her career for the family, i.e. earlier child-

bearing. Many of these women “dream about” five years of work at a well-paying multinational company, after which they can start a family and relax. Theoretically, at job interviews, it is not ethical to ask about such plans, but interviewers are often not embarrassed to ask these “forbidden” questions. We understand that it is necessary to know one’s personality, but some personal questions – e.g. plans of a family – can result in negative discrimination. Fortunately, companies are becoming more aware of the benefits from a balanced lifestyle of their employees as well as the principles of sustainable development, which also involves respecting long-term social interests [6].

Since 2007, the annual Best Workplace for Women Award has been given in two categories (division by number of employees) for companies and institutions, which best fulfil requirements of fair work conditions, career opportunities, physical and mental health-preservation, improvement of skills, and provision of the possibility to co-ordinate work and private life. The companies which have been awarded this honour are listed in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Companies awarded for the “Best Workplace for Women Award”.

Year	Company name	Sector
2007	Drogerie Markt Kft.	cosmetics retail
	Paksi Nuclear Power Plant	energy
	GE Hungary Zrt. Healthcare Division	medical
2008	SAP Hungary Ltd.	informatics
	City Service Center	finance
	ELMŰ Electricity Network Co.	energy
	GE Hungary Zrt. Energy Division	energy
	Evopro Informatics and Automation	informatics
	ZALAVÍZ Public Water Service	communal infrastructure
	Thermal Hotel Aquincum, Ramada Plaza	hotel

Year	Company name	Sector
2009	Microsoft Kft.	informatics
	Budapest Gas Works Public Ltd.	energy
	MAVIR Zrt.	energy
	S-Modell	clothing retail
	Quintiles	medical
	Kulcs-Soft Computer Technique	informatics

INFORMATION CHANNELS FOR JOB SEEKING GRADUATES

Information channels used by graduates and students do not in actuality vary by gender. In the recent past, newspaper advertisements were the primary channels of job searching, but by now the penetration of the Internet has provided different on-line channels, e.g., databases and web page of enterprises, which have gained an important role in the hunt for jobs. However, other channels, such as personal and informal ways, employment centres and job fairs should not be considered negligible either. The intensity of use of the different channels varies by region, age group and certification. In the capital, more highly developed areas' online channels play a bigger role due to the penetration of the Internet.

This is also true for young graduates. They are surfing the net daily, so it is self-evident for companies to reach their potential workforce through this channel. Companies often provide a „career” page at their site, presenting actual positions, internship opportunities offered, and one can search online job databases thematically or upload their CVs onto these sites. Career offices of universities usually send actual positions offered in e-newsletters to students and job fairs take place regularly in the most important institutes. Personal contacts with professors and

at departments which have relations with companies in the field the students are studying are also very important in the placement of graduates.

A recent survey by Career Office at Corvinus University in Budapest showed that 92% of young graduates use the Internet, 72% visit job fairs and 59.1% contact university career offices for job search. The role of the advertisement in printed journals continues to decrease (presently 25.5%) and, consequently, sources such as corporate brochures and career and job search publications are becoming more popular (41.7%) [7].

WHAT KIND OF DIPLOMA IS NEEDED IN THE LABOUR MARKET?

In a study by a website called Felvi.hu, 5019 job advertisements for graduates were examined. As a result, the dominant role of technical and economic fields could be observed (60% together). 7-9% of job offers were related to the medical sector, 8-9% to the legal, 4% to informatics and 1-2% to humanities, agricultural, natural and social sciences. In principal, this result should mean better conditions for women in the engineering fields.

When examining the advertisements, it was found that 61% required fluent knowledge of at least one, 17% of two foreign languages. In half of the cases, companies expect applicants to have had 2-3 years of professional experience. The skills required are generally the followings: open-mindedness, tolerance, precision, loyalty, being dynamic, and motivation. In addition, candidates are expected to have good problem solving, stress bearing and communication skills. Nowadays, PC knowledge is a basic requirement for graduates and the that of a driving licence is not rare either.

The changes in the Hungarian higher education system introduced many disadvantages in practice in the early years, but one declared advantage of the new system is principally the in-

ternship requirement. The panning for internship requirements still has to be reinforced in some institutes, i.e., its harmonisation between institutes, its length, the market requirements, etc., but the obligatory work experience may make graduates more competitive. Although there are problems with the evaluation and acceptance of BA/BSc degree by companies, the potential of the scheme still does not reach the students from the former system who have graduated in the recent years.

As for the present, the characteristics of current demand for labour in Hungary force will be discussed next. Nearly 30% of the advertisers for jobs are multinational companies. This can be an advantage as well as a drawback for young women, as they may provide opportunity for work experience abroad and higher salaries, but inflexibilities and notorious requirements for overtime work degrade the quality of the employees' private life.

The requirements and potential work conditions depend on the type of job offered. In this study, municipalities represented 8%, central budget institutes 1-3% (ministries, background institutions) providing health services, universities) and the majority was formed by for-profit companies (40%). The distribution of advertisements by sector is presented in the following list:

- Services 25%
- heavy industry 16%
- health sector 10%
- financial sector 8%
- central administration/government 8%
- light industry 2%
- agriculture 1%
- social sector 1%
- Non-profit negligible

57.0% of job-seeker graduates are women; while women represent 49,8% in total of job-seekers. So the situation of graduate women is worse. However, regarding the qualifications, the situation of early-stage graduates women is better.

TWO YOUNG FEMALE GRADUATES EXPERIENCES JOB HUNTING

Interview 1 – (mechanical engineer, 29 years old)

Asking the first graduate about her experiences of looking for a job, she told us the following (these statements are subjective opinions).

1. There are no jobs in Hungary: small businesses are on the edge of liquidation.
2. the employment centre had not really helped her really. She had not got a job in her profession despite of career consultation (correction of CV and cover letter). She felt being faced with the preference of men in her professional field.
3. She finds that the medical techniques module was not useful for finding a job because electric engineers are more in demand in this field and, for development jobs, those who had taken the planning module.
4. From many places, she did not even get a reply to the applications she had sent, which has had a disappointing and demoralizing effect.

Interview 2 – (biomedical engineer, age: 26 years old)

She had contacted almost every medico-technical company, and had experience gained from 45 job interviews. In many places, the offer consisted of sales of equipment on commission basis (10%). This was not acceptable for her because of the uncertainty, low payment prospects and unprofessionalism entailed (sales is generally not a core competence of an engineer). The other opportunity was in education, but, in these positions, she was offered 90,000 HUF maximum per month and they required unregistered (black economy) self-employment status. As her travel expenses would have amounted to 30-40,000 HUF, and the maintenance of her house a monthly additional cost of 150,000, this would not have been enough for tax, the accountant's services and special diet due to health problems (diabetes).

Instead, she took supplementary jobs as a swimming trainer, a tutor, a wedding organiser, which were financially more beneficial with a more flexible timetable. With specific her family situation, problems made the job search more difficult (old parents, nephew or other relatives to take care of), which was aggravated by the requirement of two-year specific professional experience for general technical engineer positions in many places.

CONCLUSIONS

These two cases highlight the special difficulties faced by young female engineering graduates. While there may not exist any direct discrimination by gender, the job requirements and conditions affect these graduates negatively. The principal value of their specific qualification and that given to it in the labour market are two different things. After several years of study they can end up in a disappointing situation from which the modification of profession seems to be the only escape, making the years spent at university seem like time wasted. Here, what needs to be underlined is the serious need of help of institutions in career planning of students through career offices, guidelines, up-to-date information, and the communication and co-operation between education and companies in order to “produce” marketable degrees.

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Aneta Peromingo*

*Placement of the graduates.
Brief introduction to the situation
in Slovakia*

ABSTRACT

A set of statistic indicators and a SWOT analysis of the graduates' situation have been put together in the Europlacement project. The article summarizes the Slovak results of the task, adding some later data and comments on the recent developments in the country. The addressed issues include the quantity and quality in the job-placement of HE graduates in Slovakia; the development of relevant national policies; gaps in the national data available; the „brain drain“ in the recent years and its increased return as a consequence of the financial crisis; and suggestions for tools that might help improve the situation.

KEYWORDS: HE graduates, employment and unemployment rates, quality of placement, policies, brain drain, financial crisis, guidance

INTRODUCTION

The main objective of the Europlacement project¹ is to help improve the job placement of HE graduates. The project has set

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¹ EUROPLACEMENT PROJECT. Expertising and Sharing Lifelong Guidance for the Placement LLP-LDV/TOI/08/IT/460; <http://www.europlacement-llp.eu>

an ambition to identify challenging issues and opportunities through the analysis of all the data accessible to the project partners.

Although comparing the data from the different countries² involved in the project has proved difficult due to the different methodologies used in these countries, some significant characteristics have emerged and thus allowed a qualitative description of the situation in each country.

This article aims to offer a brief overview of the development in Slovakia, in the context of the EU: what Slovak graduates face in common with their peers in different EU countries, and which issues stand out compared to the EU average and thus make the situation in Slovakia specific.

The review offers a sample of statistic data gained at the national and EU levels, combined with comments and suggestions made by the author.

DATA EVIDENCE

This part of the article describes the state of collecting data on job-placement of graduates in Slovakia, what sort of data is available and by whom.

At the national level, official data on the placement of HE graduates are collected by relevant education and labour authorities, mainly The Institute of Education Information and Prognosis³ and The Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family⁴.

The statistics from the labour sector traditionally focus on unemployment rates, observing the numbers and characteristics of

² Italy, Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, UK

³ UIPS (Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva), www.uips.sk

⁴ UPSVaR (Ústredie práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny), www.upsvar.sk

registered, unemployed graduates. The figures include different combinations of determinants such as education level, type of studies, length of unemployment, region and gender.

In the education sector, graduates used to be considered traditionally beyond the target for the education sector once they left the formal education system. In the past, only seldom did initiatives⁴ appear to monitor the job placement of HE graduates according to the field of study and the HE institution. Recently, the attitude has been changing and a few more projects⁴ have been implemented to also explore quality of the job-placement, including conditions and opportunities of graduates' job-placement; needs, obstacles in the labour market; and the graduate profile in terms of employers' requirements on competences.

Besides the action of the institutions that are directly governed by the ministries, there have been certain other initiatives to develop statistics related to job placement of HE graduates, including the following:

An ESF funded project (2006-2008), *Successful Graduates*⁵, was implemented through the initiatives Alternative. Communication. Citizens (AKO)⁶ and Leadership Development Program Slovensko (LDP)⁷. They explored links and bridges between HE and successful job placement of graduates in Slovakia. The project survey has described subjective assessment on „usefulness of HE studies“ for career in the view of HE graduates, shortly after graduation and some years later.

The Academic Ranking and Rating Agency (ARRA)⁸ focuses primarily on independent assessment of quality in Slovak HE

⁵ Survey: Úspešní absolventi, available on <http://www.ldp.sk>

⁶ AKO: Alternatíva. Komunikácia. Občania; <http://www.alternativa.sk/>

⁷ LDP: Leadership Development Program Slovensko; www.ldp.sk

⁸ ARRA: The Academic Ranking and Rating Agency; www.arra.sk

institutions. In a special issue of its newsletter⁹ the agency pioneered in exploring the interest of employers¹⁰ in graduates according to the HE institution.

Profesia¹¹, the company that maintains the biggest job portal in Slovakia, has been processing data from its own surveys and job advertisements. In its Merces project¹², they have developed an overview of the average salaries in different industries, including information on the expected, offered and average wages for graduates.

Universities in Slovakia themselves do not have a tradition to maintain contact with their graduates and monitor their further career development. Although the attitude has been changing, universities still lack a complex database.

European attempts to collect methodologically comparable data from different EU countries have resulted in a set of statistics regularly maintained by Eurostat¹³.

Most of them have described either population in total or the most vulnerable target groups, in the context of labour being, for instance, low wage workers and women. The number of specific indicators on HE graduates in the Eurostat databases has been rather low.

Eurostat data is of high value due to its geographical coverage, although collecting the data seems not easy and thus takes a long time. Accordingly, the latest available data are now often from 2007-2008, which in the years of rapid changes might not appear sufficiently up-to-date.

⁹ ARRA newsletter: Trh práce a vysoké školy 3/2008; available on www.arra.sk

¹⁰ based on data provided by Profesia.sk

¹¹ Profesia, spol. s r.o.; www.profesia.sk

¹² Merces project by Profesia.sk; www.merces.sk

¹³ Eurostat; <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/>

The Eurostat data allows observing trends in the development of employment and unemployment determined by the education attained, gender and age group. The highest contribution of Eurostat can be seen in the possibility to compare national data of each country mutually and with the European average.

Participation in European mobilities through Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP)¹⁴ and its antecedents¹⁵ has been monitored by the European Commission¹⁶ and through the national agencies for the programme, SAAIC¹⁷ in Slovakia– the author of this article.

The resources listed above have been used in the Europlacement project tasks and certain particular results are quoted further in this article.

QUANTITY VS. QUALITY: WHAT ARE THE REAL CHALLENGES?

Quantity in job-placement

Approximately 39% of Slovak students had already worked before their studies, according to the Eurostudent project¹⁸ data quoted in the Annual Report on the State of Higher Education in 2008¹⁹ by the Ministry of Education²⁰ in the Slovak Republic.

¹⁴ LLP: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc78_en.htm

¹⁵ see the history of European cooperation in education on <http://ec.europa.eu>

¹⁶ EC: <http://ec.europa.eu/>

¹⁷ SAAIC: Slovak Academic Association for International Cooperation; www.saaic.sk

¹⁸ www.eurostudent.eu; <http://www.uips.sk/vysokeskolstvo/medzinarodny-projekt-eurostudent>

¹⁹ MŠ SR, 2009. Výročná správa o stave vysokého školstva za rok 2008. Materiál vypracovaný v súlade s § 102 ods. 2 písm. c) zákona č. 131/2002 Z. z.). Bratislava, jún 2009; in: www.minedu.sk

²⁰ MŠ SR (Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej republiky), www.minedu.sk

The same resource¹⁹ states that, during their HE studies, both full-time and part-time students in Slovakia devoted 25 hours per week to their studies and 15 to work on average. Almost 60% of social sciences students and nearly 45% of those on technical courses were employed.

After graduation, the figures collected by Eurostat¹⁴ show that unemployment of people with completed higher education in Slovakia has mostly kept below the EU 27 average (see Figure 1). Taking into consideration that the total unemployment rates in Slovakia²¹ (i.e. independent from education level) are among the highest in the EU, the figures might tempt one to make the simple interpretation that the placement of HE graduates in Slovakia is good and unproblematic. That is unfortunately not always the case, as discussed below.

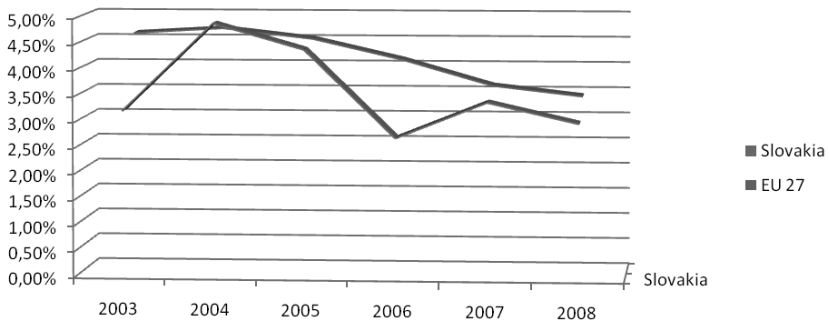


Fig. 1. Unemployment rates for the population aged 25-64 by level of education – Annual average.

The figure shows „the probability of being without a job for those who would like to have one, broken-down by level of education. The indicators provide a measure of difficulties that people with different

²¹ See Unemployment rates statistics by Eurostat to compare figures between the countries on <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/>

levels of education have to face in the labour market and offer a first idea of the impact of education in reducing the chances of being unemployed.” (Eurostat, 2010)

Since the period covered by the statistics above, the global financial crisis has resulted in general consequences on the labour market such as decreasing labour supply and increasing unemployment²². Nowadays, over 10% of graduates are unemployed²³. In addition, the crisis has also impact on the type of job contracts: supply of the most „secure“ types of job contracts (permanent employment) has decreased²⁴.

Quality of job-placement

What is the quality of the job placement? Are highly educated human resources used effectively in the country? Are the individuals fulfilling their potential and developing further in their employment?

Regular and comprehensive research is still missing as regards monitoring the quality of placement. Most of research explores the issue only from one perspective and it is not done regularly enough to observe development and trends.

However, here are some results of research activities that have contributed to exploring quality of job-placement.

Jobs matching qualification level

In its report on job-placement of graduates, the UIPS⁴²⁵ states that the highest rates for *qualified jobs* done by HE graduates are

²² UPSVaR: Dosah a vplyv krízy v roku 2009; available on: www.upsvar.sk

²³ Monika Martinková, Trenkwalder in: Jana Véghová: Škola pri hľadaní práce už nestačí. Pravda, | 10.12. 2009; available on: <http://profesia.pravda.sk/>

²⁴ B. Masár in Jenewein Group: Companies have problems with the Labour Code; available on: <http://www.jeneweingroup.com/>

²⁵ UIPS: Uplatnenie absolventov vysokých škôl; available on: <http://www.uips.sk>

found in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland, Portugal, Italy and Slovakia.

The same institution offers potential interpretation that the indicator might correlate with the rate of highly qualified people in the total population. As the rate is not so high in Slovakia in comparison with the other EU countries (according to Eurostat news release²⁶, in 2007, the rate of population aged 25-34 with completed HE was 17,5 % in Slovakia while 29,9% in EU27), the graduates still have a higher amount of opportunities for qualified jobs in the labour market. In fact, the number of graduates has increased also in Slovakia (for comparison, 8,978 in 1990 and 34,535 in 2006²⁷), and this view is also supported by some other authors²⁸ pointing at correlation between the HE graduate rates on one side and the unemployment rates, as well as quality of job-placement, on the other.

However, the method of figuring out the rate (*qualified jobs* done by HE graduates) is not clear from the UIPS report above. The rate is described as „the job position requirements on education, professional qualification and complexity of the job“. Nevertheless, it does not state whether the rating is based on an analysis of available job positions or on the requirements explicitly stated by the employers. If the latter, the relevance of the data may be questioned: does every job that is advertised with HE qualification requirement really need higher competences or is it the situation in the labour market (e.g. high regional unemployment) that allows employers to choose a highly educated job seeker even for positions that might be well filled by someone with a lower level of qualification?

²⁶ EUROSTAT News Release, 58/2009 – 28 April 2009, available on <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/>

²⁷ M. Řádek a kol., 2008: Vysoké školstvo na Slovensku Realita – Problém – Možné riešenia. EPPP, available on www.eppp.sk

²⁸ ARRA, Gfk, 2009; in: Sita, 2010. Vyše polovica absolventov nikdy nepracovala vo svojom odbore. 22.4.2010, available on: www.sme.sk

The decrease in the amount of vacancies suitable also for the newly graduated allows employers to demand for more and insist on them meeting the advertised requirements when applying for a job. The most common requirement towards graduates is high-level language competences²⁹.

Studies that match labour requirements

The survey⁶, which was conducted on 403 graduate respondents by AKO⁷ and LDP⁸, asked for HE graduates opinions on how they have used the knowledge and skills gained during their studies. Two thirds of the respondents found the knowledge and skills rather useful for their jobs (15,88 % „uses them fully“; 49,38 % „ uses them rather a lot“). The remaining third think they „hardly ever“ (26,3 %) or „never“ (8,44 %) use them.

A similar issue was explored by ARRA²⁹ on a larger sample of approximately 4,000 respondents with HE after more than three years graduation and 2,500 HE pedagogues. The question was formulated slightly differently from the one in the research mentioned above. It asked the highly educated how much (in percentage) of the knowledge and competences they needed in their jobs they had developed during their studies. The average answer was only 36%. In contrast, in the same survey, 89% of HE pedagogues thought that the graduates were very well prepared for working practise.

The respondents of the same survey by ARRA also stated that more than a half of them had never worked in the field they had studied their degrees in. A similar rate (approximately a half) was obtained in the survey⁶ by LPD⁸. This may have a number of different reasons.

²⁹ Jana Véghová: Škola pri hľadání práce už nestačí. Pravda, 10.12. 2009; available on: <http://profesia.pravda.sk/>

ARRA concludes that most graduates are discouraged by the low wages³⁰ offered for working in their field of study. Another significant reason is the problem of actually finding a job in such a field.

The author of this article suggests one more potential determinant of the figure: current job positions in the labour market often do not correspond with study courses and traditional names of HE study fields. That is why for many job positions nobody can be found who could have studied a course fully corresponding with the job advertised. This could, although it does not have to, mean that even if people use some skills and knowledge gained during their studies, they will rather give a negative reply to the survey question that asks whether they work in „the field of their study“ or not.

In any case, only 55.58% of the respondents⁶ (AKO, LDP) would choose the same study course again. Over 25% would choose a completely different course (unrelated to the one they studied) and at a different HE institution.

Low correlation between job supply in a professional field and interest in the related study is striking about many study courses. As an example, law has been among the most popular studies for many years and the number of applicants for such studies is several times higher than the available study places at universities. In contrast, the interest of employers in law faculty graduates is low²⁹. They are the most interested in graduates of technical sciences²⁹, in particular graduates of civil engineering and IT studies³¹. Slightly worse, but still good, is the situation of graduates in social sciences²⁹ and economy³². ARRA suggests

³⁰ Average median wage of people with HE (of any age): 885 EUR; Professional Salary Monitor; 18.1.2008; www.merces.sk

³¹ Lucia Burianová, Profesia, spol s.r.o. in: Jana Véghová: Škola pri hľadaní práce už nestačí. Pravda, | 10.12. 2009; available on: <http://profesia.pravda.sk/>

that this order reflects the traditional focus of the Slovak industry. Together with graduates in law, graduates of pedagogical studies are confronted with the lower interest of employers, while the lowest interest level is found to be towards HE graduates from the field of agriculture³².

Nevertheless, neither are the interest of employers and the employment of graduates in a field always in accordance. For example, graduates of technical sciences are the second biggest group of unemployed graduates (after graduates in social sciences) and their absolute number (1,240 in September 2009) is in fact more than three times higher than that of unemployed graduates in agriculture (350 in September 2009)³². The lack of experts in technical sciences on one side and the high unemployment rates among graduates from technical universities on the other are a big challenge in Slovakia.

Low matching between study courses and modern job positions is a common complaint also by employers. Study curricula often do not reflect modern job requirements in their content and the focus is much on theory and little on practise, while more graduates are interested in jobs outside academic and research field. According to 90,32% of the respondents⁶, the involvement of more practitioners would increase the quality of HE.

A regular national analysis of job profiles for graduates that would reflect on requirements in the labour market has not been developed by the relevant national authorities. Such attempts are implemented rather by university career centres and HE companies as single initiatives. As an example, a project called Uni2010³³ has been developing a model of key competences for graduates in economics in Slovakia.

³² UPSVaR: Nezamestnanosť – Absolventi-Štatistiky. September 2009; available on <http://www.upsvar.sk/>

³³ Uni2010, www.uni2010.sk

SUPPORTING JOB PLACEMENT FOR GRADUATES

Career guidance and counselling

Basic legislative support for developing career services at universities has already been included in the HE Act³⁴ of 2002. However, there is a lack of formal tools (further legislation support, financing system measures, accreditation requirements, data evidence available) that would encourage universities to invest into quality career services.

The National Strategy for Lifelong Guidance and Counselling until 2015³⁵ was adopted in 2007. The policy has formally strengthened communication between education and labour sectors. In practise, the communication between education, labour sectors and other stakeholders remains insufficient.

In 2009, an external expert group for university guidance and counselling was established by the Research Institute for Child Psychology and Pathopsychology³⁶ (a national research institution for the education sector). The group has been meeting regularly to discuss issues of and challenges to HE guidance and counselling, and it has been active in developing recommendations for policy makers. However, these experts are limited by not having a sufficient budget for further research and expert activities.

In general, career services are still considered to be special rather than standard tools among management staff at many universities. Several guidance and counselling centres that have been established within EU funded projects are limited to one type of service and have problems of keeping financially sus-

³⁴ Act No. 131/2002 Coll. on HE Institutions

³⁵ Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance Strategy till 2015. National strategy adopted by the Government of the Slovak Republic, April 2007.

³⁶ VÚDPaP: www.vudpap.sk

tainable. No quality standards for LLG services exist at the national level.

Communication between universities and graduates

Universities themselves are not using their full potential of maintaining contact with their graduates⁶. Gaining valuable data on career issues, quality assurance tools, professional cooperation and networking, using ex-students of the alma mater in career services for current students and graduates, and even possibilities of complementary funding – all these options of involving graduates have very little tradition at Slovak universities.

The role of mobility

Research results by ARRA²⁹ show that employers in Slovakia prefer graduates from foreign HE institutions to graduates from the Slovak ones³².

Also, 92% of HE pedagogues consider it important to have at least some experience from abroad. However, in the same survey, 91% of students stated never having participated in mobilities.

Despite the support from the pedagogues expressed in the survey above and the Bologna process³⁷, a number of students still report problems with recognizing credits from abroad. SAA-IC¹⁸, an umbrella institution of the National Agency for LLP in Slovakia and the author of this article, has evidence on 2,765 mobilities in 2008/2009 through the Lifelong Learning Programme. That represents a rate of 0.93% of HE students and 7.10% of HE pedagogical staff who have participated in Erasmus mobilities. In comparison, the EU average for students was 0,84% in 2007, with the highest rates for individual countries being between 1-1,7%.

³⁷ See on www.euroactive.sk

Relatively low cooperation of HE staff with their foreign colleagues is rather demotivating for students, too²⁹.

While staying in Slovakia during their whole courser of study, many young people leave abroad after graduation. There is no complex data available³⁸, but the estimations³⁹ provide figures of approximately one fourth to one third of the Slovak HE graduates having left for abroad in the recent years, which is an outstandingly high rate among the EU countries. In spite of some positive economic benefits (e.g. through remittances), the country has suffered from tremendous brain drain and a risk of negative demographical, social and economic consequences in the future.⁴⁰

On the contrary, the financial crisis has stimulated increased return of people back from abroad⁴⁰. The amount of Slovaks working abroad at the end of the year 2009 was 27% lower than in 2008⁴¹. A new issue has arisen from the return: many HE graduates used to work in low-qualified jobs abroad and, after their return, they often have problems to find qualified jobs here after the gap in their direct professional development. Besides that, those graduates who stay in Slovakia or return back from abroad are usually concentrated in a couple of the biggest Slovak cities, leaving a lack of highly qualified experts in some other regions. Most people who have been working abroad in qualified jobs and expert positions are believed to have stayed there⁴².

³⁸ Monitoring emigration rates is difficult also because only 5 – 10 % of people leaving from Slovakia cancel their permanent residence in the Slovak Republic, despite legal obligation to do so. In:

³⁹ The National Policy of State Care for Slovaks Living Abroad till 2015 (Konšepcia štátnej politiky starostlivosti o Slovákov žijúcich v zahraničí do roku 2015), Res. n. 625, Sept 17th, 2008 by The Government of the Slovak Republic; available on <http://www.rokovania.sk/>

⁴⁰ UPSVaR: Dosah a vplyv krízy v roku 2009; available on: www.upsvar.sk

⁴¹ L. Jakubička, 2009. Vráti sa talentovaní Slováci zo zahraničia domov? Press release; available on: www.slovenskocalling.sk

Return migration seems the most beneficial for the society⁴² and thus it should be supported. Some projects by commercial and non-profit organizations have been contributing to help matching employers and (potential) returnees and help both sides use the benefits of the experience gained from abroad. Some research has been made and support services provided for the target groups of migrants and returnees. Examples of projects targeted at them include *Slovensko Calling*⁴³ and *Guidance and Counselling for Migrants and Returnees*⁴⁴, both coordinated by Yeminee, s.r.o⁴⁵. and a project *Slovak Migration*⁴⁶ by an NGO Migracia SK.

The Government of the Slovak Republic passed *The National Policy of State Care for Slovaks Living Abroad till 2010*⁴⁰ in September 2008. Even the policy document itself states that „*The relevant authorities of the Slovak Republic lack exact, reliable, quality, comprehensive and up-to-date data on emigrants, as well as proper analysis of motivation for emigration and its economic, social and demographic consequences for the Slovak society*“⁴⁷.

CONCLUSION

To summarize the findings of the study, it could be argued that a comprehensive and coherent approach is missing at both the national and university levels.

⁴² See in: Baranová, A., Detko, J. Migration of population with higher education. Seminar compendium: *Career Guidance and Counselling*: Comenius University. October, 2008

⁴³ www.slovenskocalling.sk

⁴⁴ Information available on <http://www.euroguidance.net/English/Professionals/Database/Projects.htm>

⁴⁵ www.karierabezhranic.sk

⁴⁶ Slovenská migrácia; <http://www.slovenskamigracia.sk>

⁴⁷ Ref.: 40, Section 4.8.1

First of all, current needs ought to be explored. Knowing them is essential for investing finances and human resources into effective directions. Comprehensive information will involve employers, students, fresh and earlier graduates, HE institutions including their support staff (career guidance practitioners and counsellors, mobility advisors etc.) and other stakeholders in the labour market.

The national authorities should ensure sufficient data-based evidence either by using the relevant sectoral institutions or by assignment to someone else. The research needs to be regular and up-to-date, aiming to gain data that can be used further for improving the national support tools (legislation, financing mechanisms, quality assurance tools), as well as practise (by making the data accessible to providers and the public).

Universities should not rely on national data only, but also monitor developments in their local areas and industries. Improving communication with their own graduates might be an effective data resource and a form of support for ex-students at the same time.

Also employers and other stakeholders themselves need to be active. However, such initiatives require support in the form of national legislation and university management.

In general, there is still much work to be done to bridge the worlds of education and labour in practise. Bringing more practitioners to the higher education process, reflecting on labour market needs flexibly in the HE curricula, providing quality career services at universities, international cooperation and mobility support need to be considered a priority in increasing the quality in Slovak higher education. So far, they have been treated rather as something that will be paid attention to if there is any time and money left besides providing education.

In one⁶ of the many surveys quoted in this article, less than 1% of graduates considered university studies in general to be

„waste of time“, which promises hope and potential for the future.

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Czesław Noworol*

Youth on the Labour Market in Poland Context Indicators

The Commission is proposing five measurable EU targets for 2020 that will steer the process and be translated into national targets: for employment; for research and innovation; for climate change and energy; for education; and for combating poverty. They represent the direction we should take and will mean we can measure our success.

José Manuel BARROSO

ABSTRACT

The article presents the situation of the youth on the labour market in Poland. It presents the basic Context Indicators, which were considered in the project EUROPLACEMENT. General overview of the labour market in Poland is stressed as a base for further consideration of graduates situation.

KEYWORDS: youth unemployment, labour market in Poland, youth entrepreneurship.

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

The European Council has introduced the new European Union 2020 strategy for jobs and three priorities for smart, sus-

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tainable and inclusive growth, which are mutually reinforcing. The strategy will help Europe to boost competitiveness, productivity, growth potential, social cohesion, economic convergence and to re-orient policies away from crisis management towards the introduction of reforms that will promote growth and employment. It offers a vision of Europe's social market economy for the 21st century.

The youth unemployment rates are roughly twice as high as those for the population as a whole, both in the European Union and in its individual states (see Figure 1). According to Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, in May 2010, the youth unemployment rate for under-25s was 19.9% in the euro

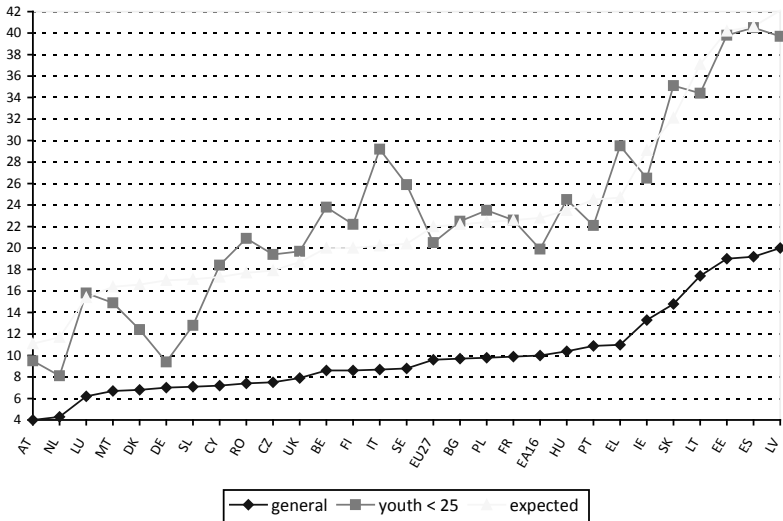


Fig. 1. Youth (under-25s) unemployment vs. general seasonally adjusted unemployment rates in May 2010. General rates for RO, EL, LT, EE and LV are from the 1st Quarter of the year 2010 and, for the UK, from March 2010. The youth unemployment rates for SL, CY, RO, UK, EL, LT, EE and LV are from March 2010 (Eurostat, 2010). The expected values are calculated from the regression dependency between the youth and general, seasonally adjusted unemployment rates.

area and 20.5% in the EU27. The lowest rate was observed for the Netherlands (8.1%), and the highest rates for Spain (40.5%), Estonia (39.8%) and Latvia (39.7%). In Poland it was 23.5% (see Figure 1).

The simple regression dependency was calculated between the youth (under-25s) and general, seasonally adjusted unemployment rates ($F = 158.5$, $p < 0.001$). The analysis reveals that the variance of general unemployment rates in the Member States explains over 85% of youth unemployment rates. The difference between seasonally, adjusted unemployment rate for the youth (under-25s) and the expected rate in Poland is 1.1 (see Figure 1).

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE LABOUR MARKET IN POLAND

The economically active population, i.e., working people, the unemployed and people of the age of 15 and over together, comprised 17,357 thousand people in Poland in the 4th quarter of 2009 (Labour Force Survey, 2010). The number of those working was 15,885 thousand while 1,472 thousand were unemployed (see Figure 2).

The employment rate for the population aged 15 and over in the same period was 50.4%. The economic activity ratio for the population aged 15 and over was 55.1% (see Figure 2).

From Figure 3, it can be seen that, compared with the previous year, unemployment in Poland increased in 2009, which is connected with the difficult situation on the labour market due to the economic crisis. Nevertheless, the increase in unemployment since the 3rd quarter 2008 until the 4th quarter 2009 is does not correlate with the economic activity ratio and rate of employment (see Figure 2), which means that Poland managed the crises quite well.

The rate of registered unemployment was 11.9% in the 4th quarter of 2009 (see Figure 3.).

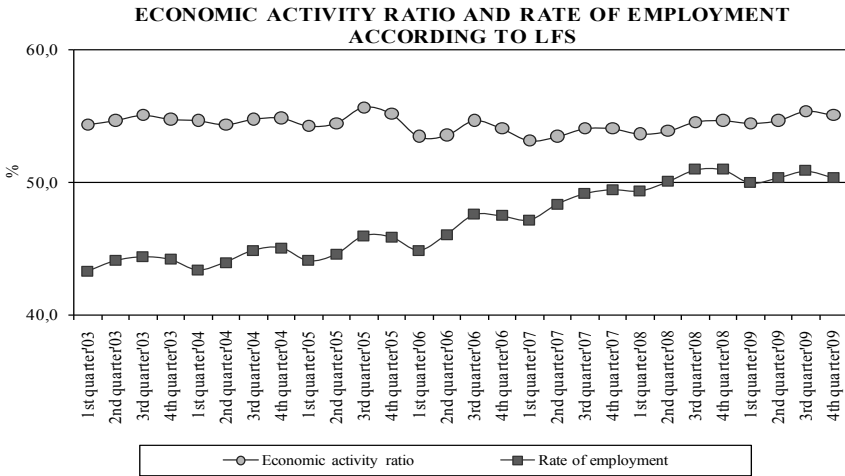


Fig. 2. Seasonal economic activity ratio and rate of employment from 2003 until the 4th quarter of 2009. (Source: CSO, 2010a).

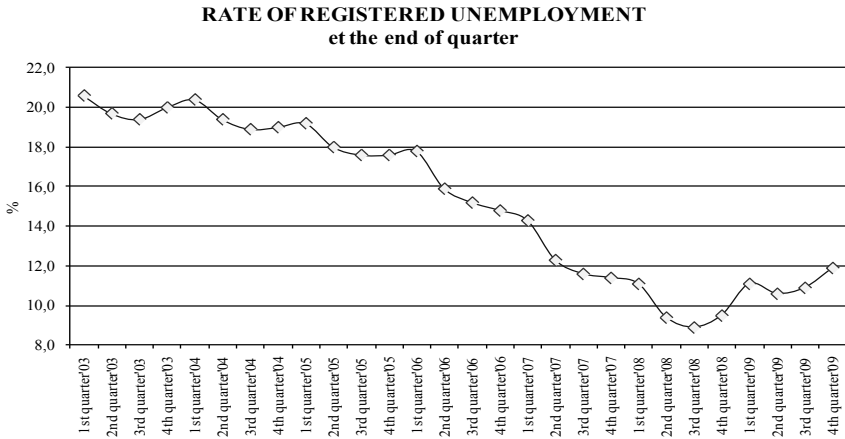


Fig. 3. Seasonal rate of registered unemployment since 2003, till the 4th quarter of 2009. (Source: CSO, 2010a).

Compared with the end of 2008, the urban unemployment figure increased by 31.9% while rural unemployment increased by 24.2%. Registered unemployment is dominated by women who constitute 51.1% of the total unemployment rate.

THE SITUATION OF THE POLISH YOUTH ON THE LABOUR MARKET

Considering the latest statistics in Poland, it should be stressed that registered unemployed people aged 18-24 make up 22.5%. People with the highest qualifications are in the most favourable situation on the labour market. The proportion of the unemployed with higher education was 9.4% at the end of 2009. From this, it could be concluded that the younger one is and the better education one has, the lower risk one has of remaining unemployed for more than a few months.

The unemployment rate for graduates in the 1st Quarter of 2010 was 27% (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. Unemployed graduates according to the level of education in the 1st Quarter of 2010 (source of data: CSO, 2010).

Level of education	(in thousands/%)
Higher	52 / 12.65
Higher secondary (post-lyceum and VET)	34 / 8.27
Lyceum	9 / 2.19
VET	16 / 3.89
Total	111 / 27%

In the 1st Quarter of 2010, the activity rate by age and sex shows that young men are more active on the labour market than women (see Table 2). The highest activity rates can be observed for the age groups 25 – 34 and 35 – 44. The next age group 45 – 54 has also very high activity rate. Thus, in general, people

under 55 seem to be very active on the labour market. The exception is the youth under 25 but they are mostly still following their educational paths. What is more, a positive aspect of their activity is that a great number of them come back to education.

Table 2. The activity rate by age and sex in the 1st Quarter of 2010 (source of data: CSO, 2010).

Sex	Activity rate by age								
	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-59/64	60/65+	15-64	18-59/64	Total
	In %								
Males	38.1	93.0	93.0	82.0	47.5	7.5	71.8	76.0	63.5
Females	29,5	77,1	82,8	75,8	33,0	5,6	58,5	66,5	47.8

Comparing the employment rates for the same age groups, that is, 25 – 34 and 35 – 44 (see Table 3 below), it is clear that they are also the highest of all the groups.

Table 3. The employment rate by age and sex in the 1st Quarter of 2010 (source of data: CSO, 2010).

Sex	Employment rate by age								
	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-59/64	60/65+	15-64	18-59/64	Total
	In %								
Males	23.2	69.6	77.4	68.7	29.4	5.2	52.8	59.7	56.8
Females	22.2	68.1	75.9	69.7	30.2	5.4	52.2	59.2	42.7

The only exception is the age group 45–54, in which the employment rate for women is 1.6% higher than in the group 25 – 34. The differences between males and females are not as big as they were for the activity rates.

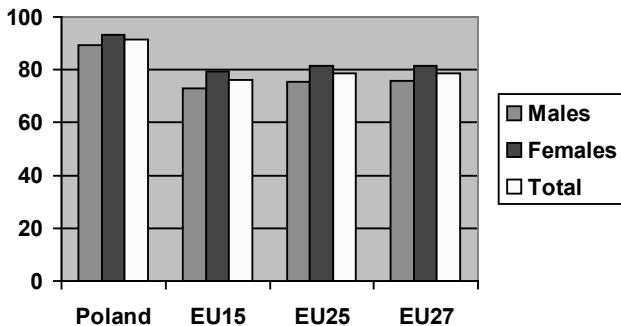


Fig. 4. Youth aged 20–24 education attainment level in Poland and in EU15, EU25 and EU27. The 2009 annual percentage average (source of data: CSO, 2010).

Educational attainment by the youth aged 20 – 24 who are mostly in tertiary and post-upper secondary education is rather good in Poland (see Figure 4.).

Furthermore, the situation concerning the early school leavers aged 18–24 is quite good in Poland. The percentage of drop-outs is so low that the benchmark for 2020 dealing with the early school leavers was reached already in 2009 (see Figure 5).

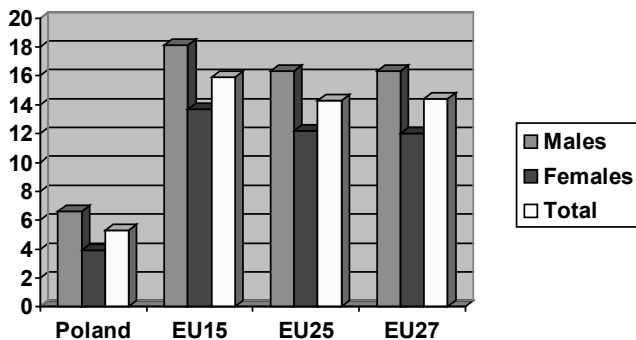


Fig. 5. Early school leavers aged 20–24 in Poland and in EU15, EU25 and EU27, percentage averages in the 2nd quarter 2009 (source of data: CSO, 2010).

The next chosen context indicators deal with the economic activity of graduates on the labour market in Poland (see Table 4. below).

Table 4. Economic activity of school leavers and graduates aged 15–30 by level of education, sex and place of residence (source of data: CSO, 2010).

Graduates	Activity rate	Employment rate	Unemployment rate
	In %		
Tertiary	91.3	72.1	21.5
Post-secondary and vocational secondary	90.8	59.6	34.3
General secondary (lyceums)	71.4	50.0	30.0
Basic vocational secondary	88.4	51.2	42.1
Total	88.4	64.5	27.0
Males	89.3	62.7	29.9
Females	87.9	66.3	24.2
Urban areas	89.1	67.3	24.5
Rural areas	87.4	60.8	30.5

Both the university graduates' activity rate and the employment rate are the highest among those of all the groups above. They have also the lowest unemployment rate in comparison to others but still unacceptably high: in actual numbers it comprises 52 thousand people. The post secondary, vocational secondary and basic vocational secondary graduates are also very economically active but they have poor employment rates and very high unemployment (Table 4.).

CONCLUSIONS

It is very important that the Polish labour market policy and development of economy are directed to reach the EU bench-

marks for 2020. The aim to reduce school dropouts to less than 10% was already reached in 2009, but it is still necessary to improve education levels, in particular by increasing the share of those aged 30-34 who have completed tertiary or equivalent education to at least 40%.

Poland needs to increase the GDP per person in a relatively short time. It is possible mainly through increasing its citizens' economic activity, full employment, especially that of graduates, macroeconomic stability, low deficit of public finances and quickly rising productivity (MPiPS, 2009). The core factor here is to increase its citizens' intellectual capital, which will be possible by means of bringing the Polish education and science up to date.

To further develop its citizens' well being and higher standard of living for, it is necessary to improve the transition path of the youth from education to working life and to support rapid development of youth entrepreneurship. The aim to follow is to raise the employment rate for women and men aged 20-64 to at least 75%, mainly through greater participation of young people and older workers in it.

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