STUDENT ADVANCEMENT OF GRADUATES EMPLOYABILITY

EMPLOYABILITY WITH STUDENTS' EYES

IMPRINT

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1   FOREWORD

With the financial crisis, with the increasing discussion about the skills of graduates and the word that seems to be impossible to avoid lately, employability, the focus of the discussion about the role of higher education has shifted towards the commodified and instrumentalised view –understanding higher education as a tool for economic growth and as a tool to increase the competitiveness of the country. We have gotten to a point where for some countries education is seen as an export. Far from being the only one, but if you listen to the discourse in England, they are very much talking about exporting education, attracting foreign students (that have to pay full tuition fees, going so far as more than 15,000 pounds per year) etc. The rankings and league tables have also increased the views of universities (and countries) competing with each other to a level where most are not able to distinguish between a successful university and a high ranked university.

And that has lead to different responses from governments and universities. Governments, which are in most countries still the predominant funder of the higher education, are demanding more efficiency, better performance and more applicable research. This can lead to more ›employable‹ courses, and to a level where higher education is almost a training and not education anymore. The discussion in higher education policy nowadays focuses a lot on the idea of employability, which is usually understood in a very narrow sense and measured as employment rates, which is anyway a wrong way to do it, but in this case also doesn't reflect the success of the university, but rather the socio-economic situation of a country. Greece for example has at the moment almost 60% youth unemployment, but that is not a problem caused by the higher education —it is a problem of the Greek economy and these rates in no way reflect the quality or success of the education.

As there were increasing calls that we need to address this issue, European Students Union (ESU) has applied the SAGE—Students Advancement of Graduates' Employability project. In the course of last 30 months, we have tried through different processes and analyses to assess what are the different views on employability as well as what are the current policy documents on European level (mostly in the framework of the European Union and the Bologna process) stating about the situation and how to address it.

This publication is looking into what are the perceptions of the students and students union on the issue of employability and how it should be addressed. Based on the study findings, as well as on the other analysis conducted through the project, we have prepared as set of policy recommendations that should be taken into account with further discussion about employability, but perhaps more importantly about the future of higher education.

Many people have contributed to the project, so it would be difficulty to include all the names, but we would like to address them our thanks for their great work. Special thanks go to Nevena Vuksanovic, who was for the whole duration of the project co-ordinating its content, as well as the one who contributed most to this publication. I would also like to sincerely thank all SAGE project partners: ILI from Germany, ANC from Romania, HÖOK from Hungary, CREUP from Spain, DSF from Denmark and SAMOK from Finland.

A very big thank you also goes to the Advisory Board, composed of Dr. Anne Corbett, Prof. Pavel Zgaga and Prof. Paul Held, who have given their comments on the research and advised us how to proceed through the whole duration of the project.

Rok Primozic,
Chairperson of the European Students' Union 2013–14

2   EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Employability was first mentioned in the Sorbonne Declaration in 1998 and it was one of the key ideas behind a harmonised European higher education system. Definition of employability has kept on changing ever since then, gaining new forms and contexts. In the Bologna Declaration (19 June 1999), employability was referred to as »citizens employability«, while in the Prague Communiqué (19 May 2001) it was clarified as »graduate employability«.[1]

2.1   EMPLOYABILITY IN THE CONTEXT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

With the Bologna Declaration, ministers and higher education institutions committed themselves to creating higher education systems that will widely reflect societal needs, encourage critical thinking and help coherent development of »citizens' employability«. For these purposes, various action lines and tools have been created in both parallel processes: the European Union and the Bologna Process (European Higher education Area since 2010), i.e. Qualifications frameworks, Cycles and ECTS, Learning outcomes, Student-Centred Learning, Diploma Supplement, Recognition of qualifications, Automatic recognition, Lifelong learning. At the European, national and disciplinary levels »learning outcomes«, »competences« and employability have been largely promoted in order to ensure similarity of curricular thrusts (Schomburg, Teichler, 2011)[2]. However, development of the educational system that will be based on societal needs and encourage »citizens' employability« had scarcely advanced from the initial plan. Moreover, higher education reforms have taken downturns in certain national contexts and jeopardised the autonomy of higher education institutions, endangering further independent development of teaching, learning and research.

Currently steered by consumerist trends, higher education is being transformed into a tool for the production of outcome-based knowledge relevant only for the potential development of economy. It is being price tagged, traded with and standardised. It is becoming fragile, less and less resistant to political and economical turmoil; it is becoming narrowed and unable to respond to the needs of the society as a whole. Moreo-

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[1]   Frederiksen, M.T., and Vuksanovic, N. (13 July 2013). Graduate Employability and the Social Good. University World News, issue: 280. An electronic version available at *http://www. universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20130712101919518*

[2]   Schomburg H., Teichler, U. (2011). Employability and Mobility of Bachelor Graduates in Europe. Key Results of the Bologna Process. Sense Publishers: Rotterdam/Boston/Taipei. An electronic version available at *https://www.sensepublishers.com/media/361-employability-and-mobility-of-bachelor-graduates-in-europe.pdf*

ver, the utilitarian approach to higher education and employability has turned higher education institutions into service providers, students into costumers of the service and teachers into facilitators.

2.2 MISCONCEPTIONS OF EMPLOYABILITY

Rising levels of unemployment among higher education graduates are one of the major concerns of the governments, higher education institutions and graduates. It threatens to de-motivate young people in pursuing a tertiary education degree and to lower the trust of students in relevance of higher education. Nevertheless, studies show that higher education qualifications are usually more employable than those of other types of education regardless of the possible mismatch of a qualification and a job.[3] This is to say that higher education plays a great role in raising the living standard of the society. However, the misconceptions of employability and those of the purposes of higher education emerge right here. Some of them are:

- Employability and employment are considered tautology;

- Employable graduates are only the ones who have acquired the first meaningful employment,

- Higher education qualifications, expressed in student learning outcomes, should match the labour market, thus enhance employability;

- Higher education should focus only on equipping students with key skills and competences[4];

- Higher education serves solely as a tool for the economic growth;

- Higher education should be considered a commodity and a good to trade with, in the European single market and global trade agreements;

- Higher education should be accessible to everyone, but in different ways.

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3 European Commission (December 2010). Eurobarometer survey: Employers' perception of graduate employability. European Commission—MEMO/10/638 02/12/2010. An electronic version available at *http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-10-638_en.htm*

4 European Commission (2006). Proposal for a Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on key competences for lifelong learning. An electronic version available at *http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32006H0962*

It is of great importance to acknowledge that higher education needs to be tailored according to the societal needs and not to the needs of the economy solely, if it is to improve the living standard. It has to be recognised that the social, economical and educational background of a family largely determines success of students in their educational paths. It is therefore clear that the ambitions for improving the relevance of higher education must be coupled with creating equal opportunities for all, regardless of background.[5]

2.3   STUDENT ENHANCEMENT OF GRADUATES EMPLOYABILITY

Employability With Student Eyes, as the main research study of the Student Advancement of Graduates Employability (SAGE) project, reflects opinions of the National Students' Unions on the current higher education trends, focusing primarily on the buzz term »employability« and the ways this concept is being dealt with in various national contexts, in response to the EU and the EHEA policies and strategies. It is also set to prove that employability is not a one-size-fits all concept and that its understanding and implementation highly depend on the national educational and economical policies. Also, it offers a unique definition of employability, from the students' point of view, as well as policy recommendations for enhancement of employability.

The European Students' Union has been looking into the concept of employability since its inception, following closely the development and reminding the policy and decision makers on European and national levels of the multiple purposes of higher education (preparation for sustainable employment, preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies, personal development, and the development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a broad, advanced knowledge base)[6] that should be reflected in curriculum, program and profile design. Students of Europe are committed to combating the utilitarian approach to higher education, in support of the reforms that cater for the needs of the society as a whole.

In order to efficiently conduct such reforms the quality of teaching, learning and research needs to be strengthened. Students should be in the centre of the reform that aims at enhancing employability, actively involved in curriculum design and governance of higher education.

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5   The European Students Union (April 2012). Bologna With Student Eyes. An electronic version available at *http://www.esu-online.org/news/article/6068/Bologna-With-Student-Eyes-2012/*

6   Council of Europe (2007). Recommendation REC (2007) 6 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the Public Responsibility for Higher education and Research. An electronic version available at *http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/publicresponsibility/explanatory%20memorandum%20public%20responsibility_en.asp*

Students should not be treated as users of an educational system, neither as consumers. They are active partners who contribute to the reform and development of higher education with their knowledge, experience and expertise. Moreover, together with other partners they create the common ground for discussions and encourage an objective approach to higher education as a tool for social development.[7]

Students believe that »no amount of charters, direct primaries, or short ballots will make a democracy out of an illiterate people«[8] therefore, this publication is set to shed the light on relevance of socially responsible and universal higher education.

2.4 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1 **The difference between employability (ability to learn; ability to gain employment) and employment (an actual acquisition of a job)** should always be kept in mind, in discussions and decision making processes on European, national and institutional levels.

2 **Employability should always be defined in a broad sense,** taking into account factors from the outside as well as from the inside of higher education (e.g. outside factors: labour market, socio-economic background and demographics of a person, inside factors: Bologna tools that influence employability, such as qualifications frameworks, learning outcomes, ECTS, Diploma Supplement).

3 **Higher education has multiple, concomitant purposes** and all should be reflected in a higher education reform. Higher education should not be designed to match the labour market needs, but should rather be tailored according to the needs of the society as a whole.

4 **Recognise and always keep in mind complexity and diversity of educational programmes, disciplines and professions** when discussing enhance-

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7 Frederiksen, M.T., and Vuksanovic, N. (13 July 2013). Graduate Employability and the Social Good. University World News, issue: 280. An electronic version available at *http://www. universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20130712101919518*

8 Rossiter, C., Lare, J. (1963). The Essential Lippmann. A Political Philosophy for Liberal Democracy. Randome House, Inc. An electronic version available at *http://books.google.rs/ books?id=htCs_vb_ZJYC&pg=PA385&lpg=PA385&dq=no+amount+of+charters,+direct+prim aries,+or+short+ballots+will+make+a+democracy+out+of+an+illiterate+people&source=bl&ots= VPc7hWVZOj&sig=hFw8sZ6uA9Gv7X6t503S4-lnsEE&hl=en&sa=X&ei=ijqYU5O2Hoj_ygO L64DADA&ved=0CDEQ6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=no%20amount%20of%20charters%2C%20 direct%20primaries%2C%20or%20short%20ballots%20will%20make%20a%20democracy%20 out%20of%20an%20illiterate%20people&f=false*

ment of employability of graduates. Research oriented universities, for example, will have a different approach to employability than Vocational Education and Training.

5   **Improve compatibility and coherence of different segments of education** (i.e. primary, general secondary, VET, higher education, adult education) while exploring possibilities for permeability between VET and higher education.

6   **The link between employability and social dimension should be strengthened** by opening access to and improving success within higher education, for students and learners coming from underrepresented demographics.

7   **Students should be actively involved in further implementation, self-certification and referencing of National Qualifications Frameworks** as well as in further developments of QF-EHEA and the EQF-LLL.

8   **Awarding of the ECTS should happen based on the estimation of workload and formulation of learning outcomes.**

9   **Learning outcomes should be fully implemented** and students involved in the design of programme and intended learning outcomes and in discussions and decision making on assessment methods and criteria.

10 **Student-Centred Learning should be fully endorsed and implemented.**

11 **Diploma Supplement should be issued to students automatically upon graduation or upon request before graduation; it should be written in one of the widely spoken languages (i.e. English, French, German) and free of charge.**

12 **Automatic recognition of academic, comparable degrees should be fully endorsed, however, not at the expense of autonomy of higher education institutions.**

13 **Recognition of Prior Learning and Student Portfolio System should be fully endorsed by the institutions.**

14 **Higher education should not abandon development of generic skills (i.e. critical thinking, problem solving, the ability to learn independently and with understanding).**

15 **Develop mechanisms that ask for students' expectations towards their studies** in order to improve relevance of the disciplines and programmes of the studies for current and prospective students.

16 **Cooperation of stakeholders** and higher education institutions can be useful for the enhancement of employability, but must be approached with care. Stakeholders can contribute with important knowledge and participate in discussions about the design and delivery of higher education programmes, but the decision-making power must always rest with institutions.

17 **Educational quality or success of higher education institutions should not be measured in terms of employment.**

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 IDENTIFICATION OF THE RESEARCH FOCUS THROUGH CONSULTATIONS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Preparatory work for the study[9] started right after Bologna With Student Eyes 2012 was published, as the first deliverable of SAGE. The consultation seminar was held in October 2012, in Limassol, Cyprus. Dr. Anne Corbett, member of the Advisory Board of the project, was one of the panellists who greatly contributed to the development of the further research of the project.

One of the points raised by Dr. Corbett was the lack of national strategies and responsibility for coordination of the educational reforms, when, now more than ever, higher education reforms need to be prioritised and steered by governments in different national contexts under the common EHEA[10] framework. Moreover, there is ambiguity of ideas of governments on one end and institutions on the other. This led to the conclusion that greater students' involvement in governance of higher education on the national and the institutional levels, as well as in raising awareness of the importance of higher education reforms, would be a key to stronger national coordination of the reforms.

The research team kept on reviewing various EU strategies aimed at enhancing graduates' chances in the labour market (i.e. EU2020, ET2020, Modernisation agenda, Youth-Pack, Youth Guarantee), EHEA Reports, Ministerial Communiqués and literature on employability. The team also took a walk down memory lane for the ESU reports on the topic (i.e The Lisbon Agenda—an introduction, Bologna With Student Eyes 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009 and 2012, Bologna at the Finish Line 2010) in order to finalise the study research plan.

The Advisory Board, which consisted of eminent European higher education experts, Dr. Anne Corbett, Prof. Pavel Zgaga and Prof. Paul Held, gave immensely important input to the research methodology not only of the study, but of the whole project as well; to discussions regarding the target of the study research and to the content of

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9 Employability With Student Eyes

10 European Higher education Area

the study. Consultation with the experts took place during advisory board meetings and online.

Once the main target of the research was identified, the research team proceeded with drafting the survey. The survey eventually was developed in coherence with the Bologna With Student Eyes 2012 survey with an aim of looking into the follow up of the recommendations and ministerial commitments of the Bucharest Communiqué, on the national and institutional levels.

3.2   MEASURES

A questionnaire with 85 questions was developed. Questions were divided into different chapters:

1   Demographic questions

2   Expectations of students towards employment

3   Skills (labour market and skills, quality of internship, skills gained in extra-curricular activities)

4   Employability of graduates and students

5   Cycles and ECTS

6   Recognition

7   Automatic recognition

8   Qualification frameworks

9   Cooperation with the third sector/companies/stakeholders and case studies (good practices on strategies, initiatives, plans, policies)

25 questions were compulsory to fill in, 60 questions were optional, as some questions could only be answered from the NUS point of view or by the Student Bologna Expert of the Student Union. In total 10 of the questions were open questions, the other questions were single- or multiple-choice questions. However, most of the single- or multiple-choice questions had options for additional open answers.

3.3   PROCEDURE

All members of ESU received invitation e-mails and reminders about the survey. They received a short description of the study and a link to the survey page.

The survey was created with the Lime Survey, an online survey tool. The survey started with an introduction about the survey purpose, deadlines and guidelines to fill it in correctly. Also contact addresses were named, if respondents had problems with filling in the survey.

After the 5th of September 2013, the survey was closed and data was exported to an excel document. Qualitative questions were exported to MAXQDA, a content analysis program and quantitative data was exported to IBM SPSS statistics for further analysis. Data was analysed and interpreted by chapter and different research sub-teams were responsible for the analysis and results' description. All questionnaires with more than half of the questions filled in correctly were included into the survey data.

Preliminary data was discussed with Dr. Corbett, Prof. Zgaga and Prof. Held, who gave constructive feedback to the research team on preliminary results, further development of the study, structure and content of the publication.

The research team would like to thank the SAGE advisors for their great, constructive and endlessly supportive contribution to the project

3.4   PARTICIPANTS

From 47 National Unions of Students in 39 countries, 35 unions from 28 countries filled in the questionnaire between June and beginning of September 2013. As unions were asked to find up to five persons from their organisation to fill in the questionnaire, a total of 73 questionnaires were filled in. In figure 1 an overview of the participating countries and the number of collected questionnaires from that country is given. Nine respondents did not provide information on the country they come from.

fig. 1   *Countries that have participated in the SAGE survey*
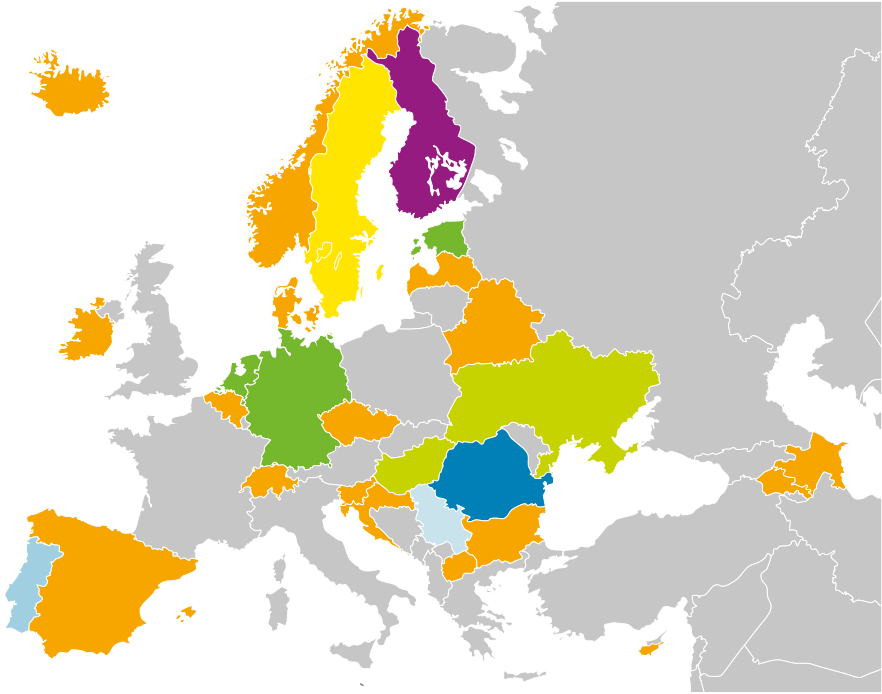
(This is a sample map of the European Higher Education Area; the same should be used where indicated in the publication. For this specific case, countries should be given colors as in the table and legend below the map.)

Legend: ■ 1.4% (1 answer) Orange,
          ■ 2.7% (2 answers) Yellow,
          ■ 4.1% (3 answers) Light green,
          ■ 5.5% (4 answers) Dark green,
          ■ 6.8% (5 answers) Light blue,
          ■ 8.2% (6 answers) Dark blue,
          ■ 9.6% (7 answers) Violett

Participants were born between 1976 and 1993 (mean = 1988.6; SD = 3.00), mean age was 25 years. A little bit more than half of the participants were female (n = 39), compared to 34 male participants. Of all participants, 36% were studying in their first three years of tertiary education (Bachelor cycle), 40% had already finished their Bachelor degree and 19% had already finished their Master degree. 6% did not answer this question.

Participants were also asked how long they have been active in the student movement. The frequencies and percentages of this question can be found in Table 1.

fig. 2   *Duration of active student movement*

	Frequency	Percentage
1 year	4	5.5
2 years	8	11.0
3 years	9	12.3
4 years	21	28.8
5 years	11	15.1
Other period	10	13.7
No answer	10	13.7
Total answers	73	100.0

15 respondents indicated that they are the Student Bologna Expert (SBE) of their country, 58 respondents said they were not the SBE for their country. Participants could also note down their field of expertise in the student movement in an open answer format. 18 respondents did not fill in a field of expertise, whereas 55 did. Some of them filled in more than one field. Main answers were: Social dimension (15 answers), quality assurance (14 answers), mobility (14 answers), financial issues (13 answers), internationalisation (11 answers), employability (11 answers), education policies (5 answers), Bologna issues (4 answers), national higher education (2 answers) and 15 fields which were only mentioned once (for example: research, interest representation, project management, entrepreneurship).

The research team is wholeheartedly thankful to all of the National Unions of Students who contributed to the SAGE research throughout the project and in particular to the study survey.

3.5   CLOSING REMARKS

The study on employability is the first ever publication on students' perception of graduates' employability. The extensive research brought many aspects together, resulting in a set of recommendations that students enthusiastically draw attention to, in debates and decision making processes regarding further enhancement of employability and relevance of higher education on the European and national levels.

Employability With Students' Eyes is food for thought, in discussions on the importance and relevance of higher education for an individual juxtaposing the society as a whole. We are hopeful that you will enjoy the reading this book, get new ideas and make sure that they are heard!

4 EMPLOYABILITY WITH STUDENTS' EYES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Employability has been brought back to the centre of attention with the EU's short-term policies and strategies aimed at recovering from the economic crisis that has recently plagued the EU. Simultaneously, relevance of higher education has become one of the main discourses of the policy and decision makers. However, »achievements vis-à-vis employability show that, despite the promises and willingness to move away from the mentality that stemmed during the Industrial Revolution and towards an education that truly values the human being, no significant progress has been made. The necessary framework has been identified, but actions with respect to it have been scarce and continue to contribute further to unemployment of new graduates across the continent«[11].

The high skills policy agenda has been embraced by most of the EU governments and has brought consumerism to the core of political discussions and decisions. It promotes knowledge-based economy which relies on the production of value-added products and services that are dependent on technological knowledge and continuous innovation. Under these circumstances, universities are expected to deliver economically productive knowledge. In »The consumerist turn in higher education: Policy aspirations and outcomes«, Shankar (2010)[12] states that consumerism approach, in the United Kingdom, has led to investing in subject areas such as Science Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, considered to provide higher return on investment, at the expense of the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. The focus on education as the »engine of economic growth« has »narrowed the way we think about social policy. It has also narrowed—dismally and progressively—our vision of education itself«, Wolf (2002).[13]

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11 The European Students' Union (2010). Bologna at the Finish Line. An Account of Ten Years of European Higher education Reform. An electronic version available at *http://www.youthforum.org/assets/2013/10/0595-10_European_Quality_Charter_Internships_Apprenticeships_FINAL.pdf*

12 Shankar., A. (2010). The Consumerist Turn in Higher education: Policy Aspirations and Outcomes. Journal of Marketing Management. Journal of the Academy of Marketing. An electronic version available at *http://www.academia.edu/4675938/The_consumerist_turn_in_higher_education_Policy_aspirations_and_outcomes*

13 Wolf., A. (May 2002). Does Education Matter. Myths About Education and Economic Growth. Penguin Books Limited, 2002.

Understanding of employability largely depends on the national and institutional contexts. Thus, it has no universally accepted definition, although there are a few attempts creating a meta-level definition that would be applied to the national educational and economic systems, in a top-down approach. On the other end, employment has scarcely been defined, due to the discourse used to make these two terms a tautology. Moreover, un/employment rates have largely been linked to education, becoming one of the indicators of quality of education provision at higher education institutions. This is the approach that requires an immediate reaction to remind the decision makers of the multiple and more importantly—concomitant purposes of higher education.

Education and employment, however, shouldn't be seen as disconnected processes. Although the labour market shouldn't be steering higher education whatsoever, co-operation of stakeholders should provide a sufficient information flow among higher education institutions, employers', teachers', students' representatives and wider society in order to improve graduates' chances in the labour market and in further learning. European students are in support of a curriculum reform that is combined with quality work placements, traineeships or internships[14], support services for seeking employment and stakeholder consultation alongside adequate graduate tracking.

4.2   DEFINITION AND CONCEPTS

Before delving more into the topic, it is important to try to define the key term of this publication, that of employability. The definition of employability is subject to extensive debate. Of course, in its simplest form, one would argue that employability is the »ability to gain initial employment, to maintain employment and to be able to move around within the labour market«.[15] This would imply a certain level of compatibility between the individual and the labour market or, even more so, a set of skills that is sufficient to make an individual employable. In a broader sense, and especially when looking into the idea of sustainable employment, employability could be defined as an individual's capacity to find work, but also to be adaptable and mobile on the labour market, both vertically and horizontally.

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14 The European Youth Forum (2010). European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships. An electronic version available at *http://www.youthforum.org/assets/2013/10/0595-10_European_Quality_Charter_Internships_Apprenticeships_FINAL.pdf*

15 Working Group on Employability of the Bologna Follow Up Group (April 2009). Report to Ministers. Bologna Coference in Leuven/Louvain-La-Neuve. An electronic version available at *http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/LEUVEN/2009_employability_WG_report.pdf*

The literature review suggests the following definitions that academics, scholars and experts in the topic have been shaping and advocating for:

- Mantz Yorke and Peter T Knight, in »Embedding employability into the curriculum«, state that employability derives from complex learning and represents a concept of a wider range than the ›core‹ and ›key‹ skills and competences. They also argue that employability is about values, not only value-added. Employability is not only for new graduates and it needs to be continuously refreshed throughout a person's working life. Employability can be defined as »a set of achievements—skills, understandings and personal attributes—that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy«.16

- Brown, Hesketh and Williams argue that employability cannot be defined solely on the basis of individual characteristics of a graduate. It is two-dimensional and refers to absolute and relative employability. »Policy debates have concentrated on the issue of whether students have the appropriate skills, knowledge, commitment or business acumen to do the job in question. This absolute dimension of employability is not inconsequential. When most jobs are low-skilled and workers interchangeable, the skills and personal qualities of employees are of little interest or relevance to employers«. Relative employability, on the other side, completely depends on the jobs' market and the rule of demand and supply. Thus, the definition encompasses both dimensions: »Employability can be defined as the relative chances of finding and maintaining different kinds of employment«.17

- Students, in line with academics, scholars and experts, draw the attention back to the strong bond between employability and social dimension. This is to say that students will develop employability in the ways that cater the best for their particular interests and circumstances. It is important to acknowledge that the student is in the centre of educational processes, thus employability, and the paradigm shift is one of the key bases for further enhancement of the concept. Furthermore, the paradigm shift to the student-centred learning lays on the

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16 Knight, P. and Yorke, M. (April 2006). Embedding Employability into the Curriculum. Learning and Employability, Series 1. York: The Higher education Authority. An electronic version available at *http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/employability/ Embedding_employability_into_the_curriculum*

17 Brown, P., Hesketh, A. and Williams, S. (May 2002). Employability in a Knowledge-Driven Economy. Working Paper Series, Paper 26. Cardiff: School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University. An electronic version available at *http://www.caerdydd.ac.uk/socsi/resources/wrkgpaper26. pdf*

foundation of an adequate implementation of learning outcomes and their assessment.

Students of Europe, thus, have created a unique definition of employability that embraces all the different aspects of the concept:

Employability is a broad concept which includes subject-specific, methodological, social and individual competences which enable graduates to successfully take up and pursue a profession/employment and empower their lifelong-learning. Employability is also about making graduates more likely to gain employment in their chosen field(s), being able to create/start new businesses, and being able to develop and succeed in their occupations.

Employable higher education graduates have a qualification with knowledge of the theories and methods of the discipline; are able to apply their knowledge on the job in order to assess and solve problems; are able to develop new qualifications; have acquired relevant soft skills; and are able to recognize their own training needs. In order to enhance employability, student-centred learning approaches must be fully endorsed and implemented by higher education institutions that empower active student participation in curriculum design and the internal quality assurance of teaching, learning and assessment activities.

Entrepreneurship should be seen as an additional method to develop students' transversal skills, and not only as a solution to graduate unemployment. ESU believes that entrepreneurship should not be a mandatory part of all curricula. However, entrepreneurial studies should be provided upon the students' request. Graduates should be provided with financial support and incentives in order to improve conditions for start-ups (ESU, 2014).[18]

To make the concept complete, it is necessary to define employment as well. What does it mean to be employed? And how do we measure employment per se? One of the main critiques that we can hear in Europe currently is directed at the quality of employment, as opposed to the traditional binary measurement that uses employed and unemployed. Terms such as mini-jobs and zero-hour contracts have become synonymous with an emerging gap between how employability is statistically registered and the everyday experience of workers trapped in substandard forms of employment. Indeed, governments that have tackled unemployment problems will often boast of great success in reducing unemployment, while ignoring significant shifts in the na-

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18 The European Students' Union (April 2014). Policy Paper on Quality of Higher education. Section on Employability and Entrepreneurship. An electronic version available at *http://esu. ukmsl.net/news/article/6064/2013-Policy-paper-on-quality-of-higher-education/*

ture of employment contracts signed across the labour market. Furthermore, the way in which data is gathered on employment varies extensively and rarely has qualitative indicators other than wage levels. For example, there is no separate tracking for zero-hour contracts in the United Kingdom, with the Office for National Statistics only deliberating on introducing special monitoring for such contracts in 2013.

Of course, there are other traps that have been identified, often by the media or by student unions, for example the practice of replacing initial job offers with ever-longer periods of training and internships.

4.3 CURRENT SITUATION INSIDE EUROPE

The global economic crisis has hit Europe particularly hard after starting in 2007. Furthermore, while most of the rest of the world is recovering from the crisis, Europe has failed to achieve much progress in rolling back the economic losses inflicted by the initial blow of the financial crisis. Some countries have fared better than others, for example Germany, but overall Europe, and especially the Eurozone common currency block have been hit hard and are still recovering slowly. In fact, the Eurozone has hit an all-time high in terms of overall unemployment at 12.0% in January 2014, 6 years after the beginning of the crisis. Unemployment spikes related to the crisis peaked much earlier in most other developed economies.[19]

One particular feature of the European crisis is the high level of youth unemployment that has afflicted much of the continent. This is all the more surprising and worrisome given that ageing has meant that there are fewer young people entering the labour market than ever. In fact, some of the countries that are most affected—such as Greece, Italy and Spain—have a rapidly ageing non-immigrant population that sees more people leaving than entering the labour force. Despite this, the young seem to be hit very hard, even with the comparatively few entrants not having the opportunity to access decent employment opportunities.

The 15 countries selected for comparison include all countries strongly affected by the unemployment crisis, as well as states deemed »good performers« in terms of how they tackled the crisis.

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19 Eurostat (February 2014). An electronic version available at *http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa. eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/3-28022014-AP/EN/3-28022014-AP-EN.PDF*

fig. 3 *Ratio of general unemployment and youth unemployment rates in 2008 and 2012.*

Country	General unemployment rate		Youth unemployment rate		Youth/general unemployment	
	2008	2012	2008	2012	2008	2012
Belgium	7.0%	7.6%	18.0%	19.8%	2.6	2.6
Bulgaria	5.6%	12.3%	11.9%	28.1%	2.1	2.3
Czech Republic	4.4%	7.0%	9.9%	19.5%	2.3	2.8
Denmark	3.5%	7.5%	8.1%	14.0%	2.3	1.9
Finland	6.4%	7.7%	16.5%	19.0%	2.6	2.5
France	7.8%	10.2%	19.3%	24.7%	2.5	2.4
Germany	7.5%	5.5%	10.6%	8.1%	1.4	1.5
Hungary	7.8%	10.9%	19.9%	28.1%	2.6	2.6
Ireland	6.4%	14.7%	13.3%	30.4%	2.1	2.1
Italy	6.7%	10.7%	21.3%	35.3%	3.2	3.3
Lithuania	5.3%	13.4%	12.2%	26.7%	2.3	2.0
Malta	6.0%	6.4%	12.2%	14.2%	2.0	2.2
Romania	5.8%	7.0%	18.6%	22.7%	3.2	3.2
Spain	11.3%	25.0%	24.6%	53.2%	2.2	2.1
United Kingdom	5.6%	7.9%	15.0%	21.0%	2.7	2.7
EU-27	7.1%	10.5%	15.8%	22.9%	2.2	2.2

Source: Eurostat

Some countries have seen massive fluctuations. Lithuania, for example, started with an unemployment rate of 5.4% in 2008, only to climb to 18.0% in 2010, and fell back down to 13.4% by 2012. This was accompanied by record levels of emigration, especially at the peak of the crisis. Spain saw unemployment rise quickly: it was 18% in 2009 from a start of just 8.3% in 2007. It continued to rise slowly after that.

It is also significant to note that while final data for 2013 is not yet available, unemployment across both the Eurozone and the EU-27 continued to rise, albeit at a slower pace.

It is also important to note, on the issue of youth unemployment, there are significant fluctuations in terms of how this rate is calculated. However, the clear trend for most countries (in the sample, all except Germany) to have a rate of youth unemployment at least twice that of the national average is clearly visible.
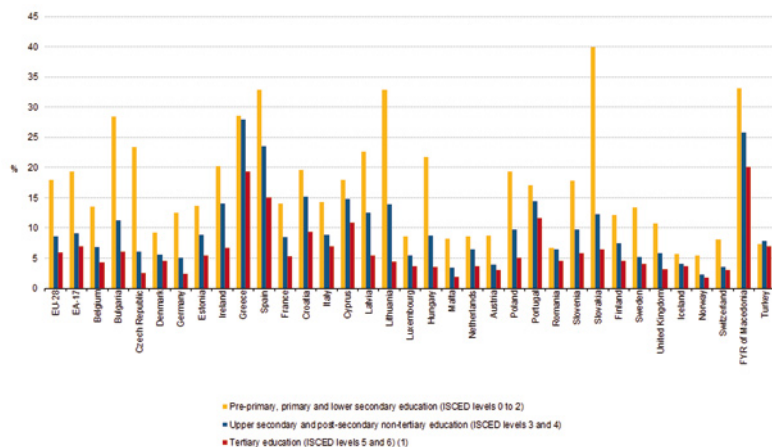
Going beyond the disparity between general and youth unemployment, the issue of quality of work must also be addressed. Even though the total number of people working fell, within the diminishing category of working people, the share of those that worked part-time increased. The share of part-time workers rose from 18.8% to 20.0% between 2008 and 2012, with steeper rises recorded in several central and eastern European countries (and especially the Baltics), Ireland, Spain, Italy and Finland (all above EU-27 average).[20] While in some of these countries the base from which this growth started was very low, in many EU countries the share of people working part-time is now above 25%. This includes Germany and the United Kingdom, the countries that have had the best results in fighting unemployment, indicating that low unemployment often masks gimmicks that distribute work among more part-time employees.

Lastly, since this publication is dealing with the issue of employability and employment from a student—and thus education-related—perspective, it is interesting to look at the correlation between educational attainment and employment levels.

This comparison seems to point to a result that vindicates the impact of a university education on the chances that a person has to gain a job. In the EU-27, a little less than 6% of the people with a higher education degree were unemployed as of 2012. The gap was quite wide when compared with graduates of secondary education and with those of primary education only (which had by far the highest rate of unemployment). The results seem quite clear-cut, the more educated a person is, the greater chances he or she has of being employed.

20 Eurostat data available: *http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tps00159&plugin=1*

Pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education (ISCED levels 0 to 2)
Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED levels 3 and 4)
Tertiary education (ISCED levels 5 and 6) (1)

Source: Eurostat[21]

Of course, this data does not offer fool proof evidence that access to higher educa-
tion offers in itself greater employment opportunities. For one thing, there is always a
chicken or egg question: is education making the difference in employment rate, or is
the social origin of the person (and the social network determined by it) influencing
their likelihood of entering higher education. So, is education making people more
employable, or are the more employable people going to higher education in larger
numbers?

Also, there is the problem of correlation between studies and employment: how many
of the higher education graduates work in a sector that is related to their studies. Not
all EU countries have comprehensive graduate tracking schemes, and in a flexible
economy it is difficult to establish clear-cut links between study fields and occupa-
tional areas, so it is difficult to give a convincing answer to this.

While the impressive correlation between tertiary education attainment and employ-
ment seemed to indicate the usefulness of taking part in higher education for employ-
ment purposes, other statistics paint a more mixed message: both Germany and Aus-
tria, the countries with the lowest unemployment and lowest youth unemployment in
the Eurozone, have lower than EU-average tertiary education attainment among 30 to

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21 Eurostat: *http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Unemployment_*
statistics

EMPLOYMENT WITH STUDENT EYES

34 year-olds. Austria is, in fact, not far from the rates seen in Italy, Romania or Slovakia, some of the countries with the lowest rates of tertiary education attainment.

Given this complex set of indicators which often seem to be at loggerheads, one can only say that the impact education has on employment is strongly influenced by other aspects such as government policy, macroeconomic situation, labour laws, the attitudes of employers and other factors. Learning takes place in formal settings, but the leap from education to the labour market often requires a difficult first step, which is often hard to make in conditions of low overall employment rates.

There is one more risk that is emerging, as the crisis in Europe seems to last much longer than in other regions of the world. There is the risk that long-term unemployment might have a negative impact on social capital in general, and on the long-term career prospects of young people and graduates who are unable to make the vital first step into the labour market in particular. People who are out of both education and training stop accumulating vital skills, either via formal learning, or via experience gained through work-based formation.

4.4 LINKS BETWEEN EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

The links between education and employment are numerous and multi-faceted. The most obvious link is that represented by the real-life integration of the learning experience resulting from formal education and that generated by participation in various work-based activities. These are further linked by programmes created by businesses to integrate recruits and existing employees, but also elements of the curricula existing in universities and schools that help bolster the employability of graduates.

One of the most important links, existing in the natural state of human economy is that of activity-based or practical learning resulting from employment. This has always existed, in the primitive form given by various apprenticeships and by trait learning existing since the discovery of tools. This rather informal learning has rules that differ from normal education, but is still valued in the labour market. For example, periods spent learning as part of a job or occupation are recognised on the labour market as de facto qualifications via CV's, letters of recommendation, portfolios and other tools aimed at formalising informal learning in the workplace.

The learning process in work-based contexts is also the focus of extensive research. Several dominant theories have emerged, including activity theory and situated learning theory, which take a look at various aspects of the practical learning experience, from different angles. Activity theory tends to focus on how activity systems influence

learning, while situated learning focuses largely on the way in which an individual responds to specific settings and how they behave in certain communities[22].

What practical learning theories have in common is the acknowledgement of the formative impact of the participation of an individual in a work-based experience. While the learning that takes place is quite specific (unlike academic learning, it is not theoretical, rather narrow and often parochial), it is useful nonetheless if it is followed-up by employment in the sector.

In practical forms, the lack of experience is now often used as a pretext to offer internships, as opposed to jobs contracts, to graduates. Internships are of considerable value to employers: they enable a company to test potential recruits, they offer a way of circumventing rigid labour laws in certain countries, and they often mean reduced overhead costs related to the activities performed by interns. While the intern gains from the learning experience and from the opportunity to make sectorial contacts in the area in which he or she undertakes the internship, such forms of activity provide little to no security and—usually—low levels of income, thus they become problematic if prolonged.

We are, in fact, seeing that employment and education are interlinked to an ever greater extent. Lifelong learning is, to some degree, the common point. 47.6% of European employees participate in Continuing Vocational Training (cvt) courses provided by the companies that employ them[23], while at the same time universities are increasingly open to the idea of providing training for potential learners of all ages. This integration between employment and learning has other dimensions as well, and it is open to debate whether such integration should happen in an organic or policy-directed fashion. Nonetheless, tools designed to further link learning and the economy are continuously being developed, and increasingly so in European political processes.

To draw the line and summarise, we will look into the sage research figures on student thoughts about the chances of graduates of higher education in the labour market. In 9.6% of answers the possibility of gaining the first meaningful employment was high, in 31.5% of answers the possibility was characterised as medium, while in 17.8% it was characterised as low. In addition, 78.1% of respondents claim that employers are not aware of the value of Bachelor's degree.

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22 Hans Christian Arnseth (2008) Activity theory and situated learning theory: contrasting views of educational practice, Pedagogy, Culture & Society, 16:3, 289-302, DOI: 10.1080/14681360802346663

23 Eurostat: *http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=t2020_41&plugin=1*
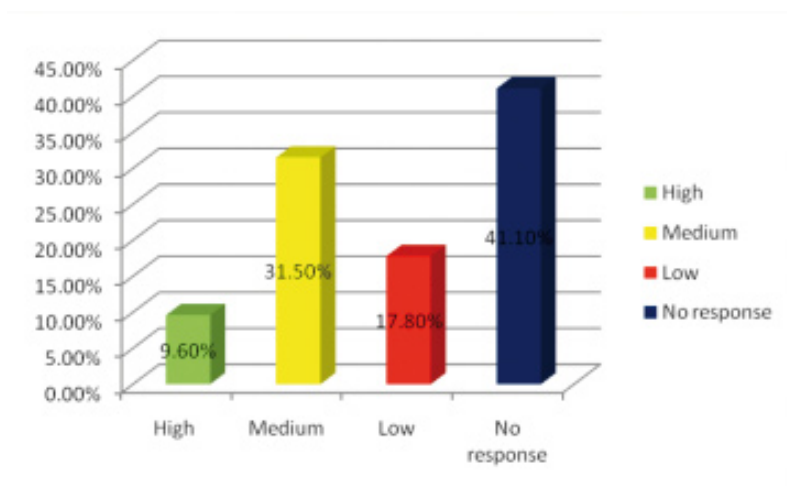
Denmark (DSF) reports that the ordinary bachelor degree scarcely gets recognised by employers. In Czech Republic (SKRVŠ) recognition exists in theory but not in practice.

4.5   EMPLOYABILITY IN THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

Employability was one of the core objectives of the Sorbonne Declaration in 1998, with the creation of a European Higher education Area being seen as a way of promoting the mobility and employability of citizens. In the Sorbonne Declaration, employability was also identified as one of the positive outcomes of having set comparable degrees across a European Area of education (Sorbonne, 1998)[24].

In 2001, employability featured in the communiqué again, and in 2003 the Higher education sphere welcomed the ministers' appeal to institutions and employers to make full use of the Diploma Supplement for fostering employability, whilst allowing them to benefit from the added transparency and flexibility of the higher education degree systems.

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24 France, Germany, Italy and the UK (May 1998). Sorbonne Declaration. An electronic version available at *http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/SORBONNE_DECLARATION1.pdf*

In 2007, there was agreement on the need for data collection on employability, in order to have it included in the stocktaking report. The now functioning Bologna working group on employability identified a series of outstanding issues related to the employability of graduates, such as the over-supply in a few sectors, following strong massification trends in the 1980s and 1990s. It also identified issues of access and the issue of cycle employability as important points to be raised in any comprehensive debate on education and employability.

At this stage, the discussion on employability within the Bologna Process was to a certain degree overshadowed by the re-launch of the Lisbon Strategy, under the heading »Agenda for Growth and Jobs«, which emphasized the economic facet of education. Indeed, increasing employment rates were deemed to be among the most important success criteria within this Strategy (European Commission, 2007)[25].

This increasing focus on the subject of employability by governments and political stakeholders has often met with strong negative reaction from other educational stakeholders. This has been quite characteristic of the student movement, for example, with most ESIB/ESU debates on the topic emphasising the importance of keeping academic values at the core of education as opposed to transforming HEIs into agents for economic developments as such.

Employability in itself is strongly linked with several Bologna action lines and developments, as well as to multiple European Union political initiatives. Employability is a strong goal for most governments (especially since this is perceived as return on investment considering the high deficits that most Western governments run), and there has been an increased tendency for governments to look at Higher education from an economic angle. This has been very much evident when cuts have been made during the recent financial crisis, with humanities and other fields viewed as less economically rewarding have been disproportionally affected.

While discussing employability and the Bologna process, one of the most interesting aspects to look at is that of links and potential links with various Bologna action lines and developments. Employability in itself is both influenced by and influential on the way in which Bologna-inspired educational reforms are carried out.

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25 The European Commission (2007). Agenda for Growth and Jobs.

4.6 EMPLOYABILITY AND SOCIAL DIMENSION

The employability factor is crucial in the fostering of a social dimension to higher education. First of all, employability is more crucial for students from disadvantaged backgrounds more than any other group. It is these students that lack a good enough social safety net if their investment in higher education is not followed up by gainful employment. There is an important need to motivate people from disadvantaged backgrounds to apply for Higher education, and a perceived boost to employment opportunities is often a major motivation for a person that has problems in affording tuition related costs in the first place. Also, there is a clear need for those people who have accumulated debt during their studies (either because of the costs or by forfeiting gainful employment in order to focus on studies) to be employable upon graduation. This does not mean, of course, that people from disadvantaged backgrounds should seek education just for the sake of acquiring employment, but it is important to note that diminished employability perspectives are an impediment to access. Thus far, access to Higher education has been one of the best tools in terms of breaking cycles of poverty, and part of the reason for this is the fact that it offers still greater employment opportunities than lower levels of education. (Lavin, 2007)[26]

One other dimension of employability impacting the social dimension is the possibility for students to work and find employment during their studies. While this does not always link with the studies themselves, it is important for institutions to facilitate the combining of work and study. This can be done by flexible learning paths, flexible hours, the opportunity to study part-time, combining e-learning and regular courses, evening courses, etc. These measures are very important for attracting students from non-typical backgrounds, including mature students and students with families.

4.7 QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS, STUDENT-CENTRED LEARNING AND THE EUROPEAN CREDIT TRANSFER AND ACCUMULATION SYSTEM (ECTS)

One major development that has the capacity to improve the employability of graduates is the development of qualification frameworks. By creating a set of comparable frameworks across Europe, a unique opportunity to shed the opaque image of Higher education in the eyes of many employers is now arising. It is, of course, vital that public administrations and HEIs themselves try to inform the wider public on the importance of the frameworks and their potential use. In the long run, the use of newly de-

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26 Lavin., A. (2007). Passing the Torch: Does Higher education for the Disadvantaged Pay Off Across the Generations?, Russell Sage, New York, 2007.

veloped Bologna transparency tools has the capacity to ensure that all the learning outcomes that students attain during their studies can be recognised for employment purposes. This will help stop situations in which—for example—the confusing name of a programme can hinder the employability prospects of a graduate.

The SAGE survey reports that in 5.5% of cases classification of occupations has not been done yet, while in the majority of cases, 20.5%, students have no knowledge of the classification.

fig. 6   *In this question students were asked if classification of professions (occupational classification) has been implemented in their countries.*
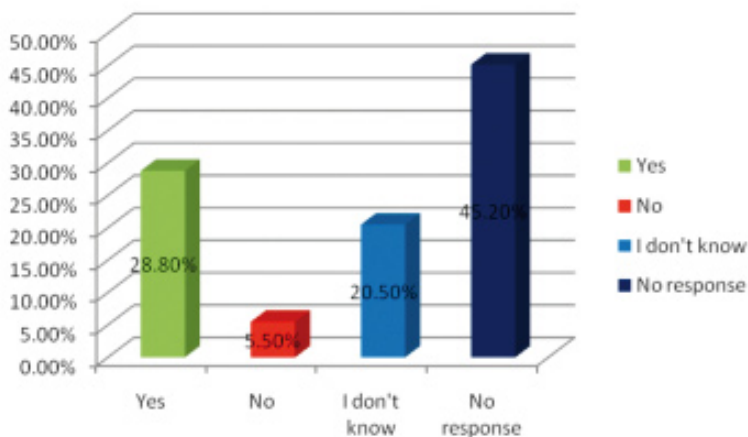
Qualifications frameworks have largely been implemented by now, however lack of knowledge on qualifications frameworks on the side of NUS representatives and students in general, is higher than ever. Students are fully consulted on self-certification of the NQF towards the QF for EHEA and referencing towards the EQF-LLL in only 12.3% of cases. In Denmark, for example, students have been involved throughout the process of development, implementation and self-certification of the NQF for higher education however they haven't been part of the process of development, implementation and referencing of the NQF for lifelong learning. Even though the participation rate of students is low, respondents strongly believe that NQFs help:

1   Transparency of study programmes and qualifications,

2   Facilitation of recognition processes and

3   Enhancement of lifelong learning opportunities.

Also, they are aware of the importance of NQFs for easier access from Vocational Education and Training (VET) and other forms of education to higher education and vice versa, and a smoother permeability.

Students of Europe unanimously agree that further implementation and development of student learning outcomes and assessment methods and criteria is of an immense importance for the enhancement of employability and the paradigm shift towards student-centred learning. In order to further implement and improve the student-centred system, it is crucial to look into the implementation of ECTS, estimation of workload and formulation of learning outcomes. Student representatives were asked if the allocation of ECTS is being conducted based on both measures mentioned above. 12.3% of respondents said that the allocation of ECTS is based completely on the estimation of workload and formulation of learning outcomes; while 16.4% claims that this is not the case at all (e.g. the allocation is based solely on the estimation of workload).

Also, room for improvement exists in the participation of students in curriculum design, as only 6.9% of students in Europe fully take part in the curriculum, programme and profile design activities, 57.5% to a certain extent and 35.6% doesn't participate at all. This is important in particular when discussing concomitant purposes of higher education and their reflection in the curriculum, programme and profile design.

4.8   RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATIONS AND DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT

One of the most important Bologna tools in fostering greater employability, and especially transnational employability, is the recognition of qualifications and short-duration cross-border studies. This recognition extends the employment opportunities available to students and graduates by offering them access to a pan-European labour market. National Unions of Students were asked to give opinion on whether there have been any changes regarding recognition of qualifications since Bucharest Ministerial conference. Unions gave unanimous negative answers.

The Lisbon Recognition Convention (Council of Europe 1997) set out the basic principles behind the process of recognition. Thus far, all the Bologna signatories except Greece ratified it. The ENIC/NARIC centres have provided great help in reaching fair recognition practices. However, problems regarding recognition on the institutional level are persistent and still exist. Romania reports issues with mobility within the country, that is to say that degrees are not being recognised easily by different institutions within the country, while the recognition of foreign degrees has fewer obstacles. It is very important to stress that recognition procedures have to be transparent and clear to the prospective and current students of a higher education institution in order to avoid confusion and malpractice.

Tools like Diploma Supplement, ECTS and Qualifications frameworks are making fair recognition within the EHEA easier, however, the conditions have to be made more friendly for students and graduates coming from the outside of the European Higher education Area.

There are numerous tools and political initiatives staving from the Bologna process that have been to a great degree oriented towards improving the communication with the real economy. For example, the Diploma Supplement is aimed to a certain degree at better describing the exact learning achievements of students that undergo a certain program. Still, there is little evidence that the tool has been taken up by employers as a simpler method to gauge the learning experience of a student. Moreover, issuing of Diploma Supplement is being charged by the institutions in 20.5% of the SAGE survey answers and issued in languages other than the widely spoken ones (i.e. English, French, German). Also, students have been reporting numerous problems with higher education institutions that issue different versions of Diploma Supplements, that don't correspond to the version/the template agreed upon by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO-CEPES and confirmed in the Lisbon convention.

Diploma Supplement is compulsory and regulated by the law and ordinances, in the majority of countries, while in Ukraine it is guaranteed by the Act of the cabinet of Ministers. In Switzerland it exists only in the form of a recommendation of the Rectorate to use the Diploma Supplement at Univerisites of Applied Sciences and Universities, while in Romania it is regulated by the Law on Education and supported by the Student Statute which also states that the Diploma Supplement has to be free of charge.

4.9 AUTOMATIC RECOGNITION OF ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS

Automatic recognition refers to a process where students' certificates would not need to go through an assessment of equivalence with national qualifications, but which could be checked for authenticity and award by a recognised institution within the EHEA, to ensure authenticity of the degree and its award by a recognised higher education institution.

In 2012, Ministers of the EHEA have stated the following:

>*We are determined to remove outstanding obstacles hindering effective and proper recognition and are willing to work together towards the automatic recognition of comparable academic degrees, building on the tools of the Bologna framework, as a long-term goal of the EHEA. We therefore commit to reviewing our national legislation to comply with the Lisbon Recognition Convention. We welcome the European Area of Recognition (EAR) Manual and recommend its use as a set of guidelines for recognition of foreign qualifications and a compendium of good practices, as well as encourage higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies to assess institutional recognition procedures in internal and external quality assurance.« (EHEA, 2012)*[27]

This is when the pathfinder group on automatic recognition was created with an aim of exploring the options of a smooth implementation of the concept. Although the idea is quite new to majority of the EHEA countries, some of them show quite good progress in the implementation of automatic recognition of the academic qualifications, as students report.

When asked to report on legislative provision for automatic recognition in their national contexts, students said that such exists in 15.3% of cases, it doesn't exist in 26.4% of cases and they had no knowledge on the matter in 16.7% of answers.

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27 The European Higher education Area (April 2012). Ministerial Conference. Bucahrest Communiqué. An electronic version available at *http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/(1)/Bucharest%20Communique%202012(1).pdf*
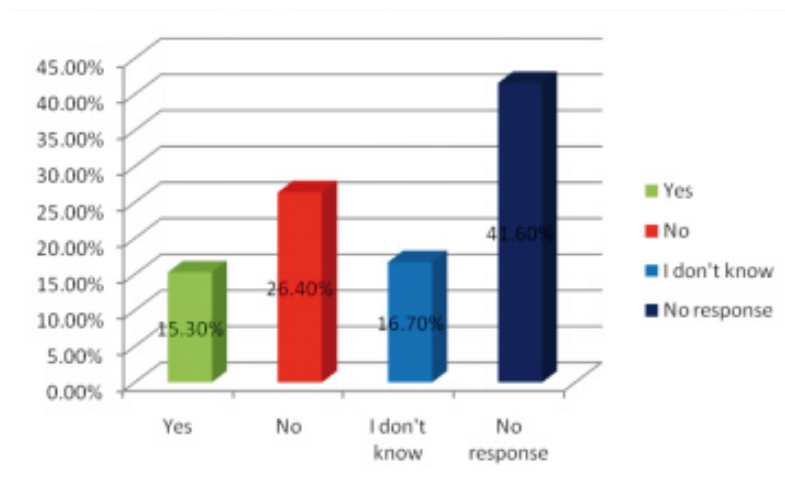
Students are quite supportive towards the concept, even more so after the recognition processes on the institutional and national level have became administrative burden and an obstacle for further education and acquisition of a job. According to the SAGE results, 44.4% of students are supportive towards the concept, while in only 5.6% answers there are certain concerns that the process might endanger autonomy of institutions.

An interesting figure to look at is what concerns students have regarding current practices of recognition that hinder smooth and fair recognition of qualifications. Students reported:

- Long administrative procedures—30.6% of answers,

- High administrative costs—11.1% of answers,

- The degree doesn't meet all the conditions required for higher education—18.1% of answers.

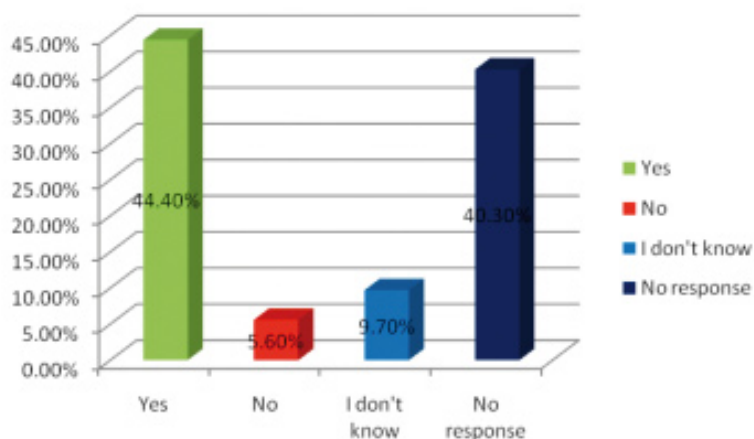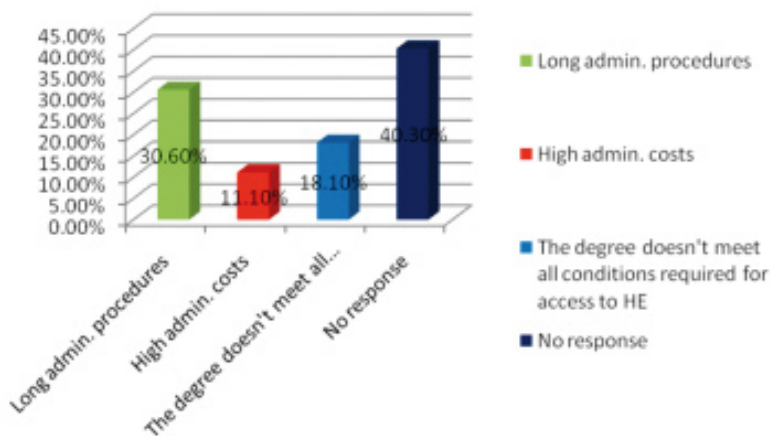fig. 8   Students' support of the automatic recognition

fig. 9   Students' concerns regarding current recognition processes

When asked to report on good practices on recognition, Denmark stated that there is Nordic cooperation on automatic recognition of qualifications (the Reykjavik Declaration). Norway, on the other hand reported that automatic recognition exists only for

certain vocations regulated by the EEA-legislation (EU law governing recognition of professional qualifications), but otherwise there is no automatic recognition.

Inititatives on the national and institutional levels regarding improvement of recognition are various and mostly focus on recongition of qualifications for further learning. A comprehensive overview of initiatives of different countries can be found in the Table *fig. 10* below.

fig. 10 Initiatives on automatic recognition

COUNTRIES	INITIATIVES (quotes from the survey)
Denmark	It is the study boards with a 50% student representation that are responsible for the recognition.
Norway	Recognition of foreign degrees is a part of the mandate for the national quality assurance agency, NOKUT. There are vocations that are automatically recognised in connection with the EU/EEA regulations, however all other applications for recognition are processed individually and paper-based. This means that the combinations of subjects and programmes are taken into account on an individual basis. There is no database, but only a general set of rules for each individual country and the most common levels and types of study. The institutions do the recognition of courses in degrees, for example when a student is halfway through their studies in another country and wants to complete their degree in Norway, or credit mobility. There are new systems being formed where there will be a national register for the universities to use to complete this credit recognition.
The Netherlands	Nuffic and DUO (two Dutch organisations) are in charge of automatic recognition.
Germany	It's almost always handled on an individual basis.
Sweden	To get the qualification recognised, a student applies to the Swedish Council for Higher education, who makes the decision. If a student is not satisfied with the decision s/he can appeal.
Lithuania	Bilateral agreements and joint degrees are mechanisms that apply principles of automatic recognition.
Armenia	There is not a large number of incoming students, therefore we as a Union don't deal with the issue of automatic recognition.

COUNTRIES	INITIATIVES (quotes from the survey)
Hungary	The Hungarian Accreditation Committee established in 1993 is responsible for accrediting and evaluating the quality of teaching and research at higher education institutions. It assesses the standards of education and research in each higher education institution at least in each 8th year (institutional accreditation) based on a detailed self-assessment of the institution and the report of a visiting committee. The Hungarian Accreditation Committee also examines the curricula, the qualification requirements as well as the quality of the academic staff and the teaching facilities (program accreditation). Degrees and qualifications Hungarian universities and colleges grant degrees following a binary pattern. Colleges and universities grant »Főiskolai oklevél« (college-level degree) and universities award »Egyetemi oklevél« (university-level degree). The duration of training at college level requires minimum 3 years and maximum 4 years of studies, while the length of study at university level is minimum 4 years, maximum 5 years (one of the few exceptions is the medical course where the duration of education is 6 years). Students complete their education with a final examination consisting of the preparation and defense of a dissertation, oral and/or written.
Romania	Sometimes there are partnerships between universities from Romania and other universities from abroad and based on these partnerships the process of recognition is facilitated between the two universities. This also happens at national level when the Ministry of Education makes some agreements with other countries and they look into specific aspects to HE system from the both countries; they then build a mechanism that makes the recognition smoother.
Portugal	International cooperation: international programs that promote student mobility in undergraduate programs or postgraduate courses or research projects, such as networks CLUSTER CESAER, TIME, ATHENS and MAGALHÃES-SMILE. Joint PhD programs with international universities, such as, MIT, CMU, UT Austin, EPFL.
Belarus*	Bilateral agreements with other HEIs and joint degrees are one of the main tools for improving recognition and automatic recognition.

| COUNTRIES	INITIATIVES (quotes from the survey)
Switzerland	Different procedures recognised in different institutions. Students from Germany must have a high school degree with the mark of 2.5 to enter the University of Basel. For the University of Bern they need a 2. If students are from Austria, they need a high school degree. If students are from Germany and want to enter a Master in Switzerland, where they need a minimal mark, there are still discussions, which German mark has the same value as the Swiss mark and so on. Students from several countries (but not all!) need to prove that their subject at the home institution is compatible/similar to the programme at the host institution in Switzerland.
Iceland	Each university has an international office that goes carefully through any applications that come from outside of Europe and cooperate with certain foreign universities.

*Countries that are not members of the European Higher education Area.

4.10 RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING AND STUDENT PORTFOLIO

A complementary element that has the ability to enhance the employability of graduates across borders is the recognition of prior learning. This creates the premise of recognising the knowledge and experience from non formal educational contexts, prior employment or extracurricular activity within educational settings, paving the way to successful implementation of flexible learning paths. This is a significant tool to help people from various underrepresented demographics penetrate into higher education. It also helps the implementation of flexible learning paths. In Denmark, recognition of prior learning is high on the agenda and largely supported by the government.

When asked whether, in their opinion, skills and competences gained through non-formal educational contexts are recognised by the labour market, students gave a positive answer in 68.5% of cases. 13.7% do not think that this is the case and 17.8% has no knowledge on the issue.

fig. 11 *Skills and competences gained through non-formal educational contexts, recognised by the labour market.*
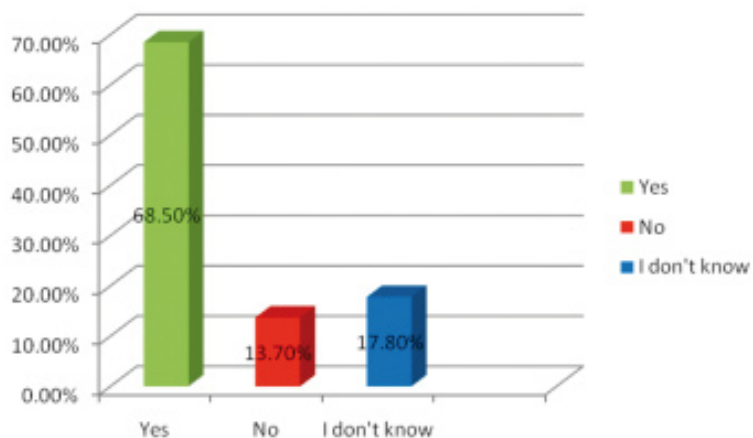
The respondents were asked if the student portfolio system exists in their national context. A portfolio refers to a way of displaying the competences one has gained prior to seeking admittance to higher education, or alternatively, to the working life. In another words, it is a system to have one's knowledge recognised as competences and learning outcomes systematically, so that the higher education institution can recognise the prior learning one has gained. The knowledge might have been obtained in the non-formal educational contexts, previous work places, extracurricular activities or by having self-studied.

The majority of respondents, 56.2% reported that no student portfolio system exists in their national context. Only 12.3% states that such system does exist. 31.5% have no knowledge on the matter.
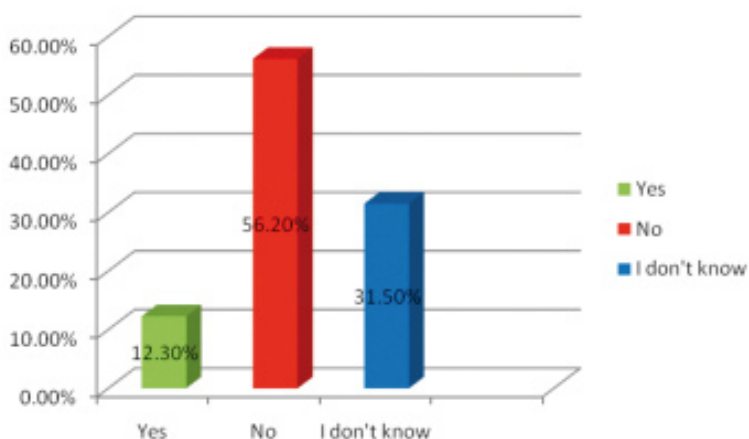
It is worth reiterating that recognition of prior learning at any level (be it European, national or institutional) improves the chances of non-traditional learners and those coming from various underrepresented demographics. These groups are the most vulnerable when it comes to their access to higher education and to transition to employment.

4.11   SKILLS

CURRENT DISCOURSE ON SKILLS

The topic of graduate skills has been dominant in the discussions on different policy making levels over the past years. The reasons for this vary, but most prominent has been the crisis and its effects; the high unemployment levels have brought attention to the qualities higher education graduates have, or do not have. Secondly, the forecast that by 2020, 20% more jobs will require higher level skills has turned attention to the current situation. Two phenomena are often attached to the discussion on skills; skills mismatch, where the supply of graduates does not match the demands of the labour market, and the over qualification of graduates. The latter implies that there would be too many graduates for the current need.

The latest European level document to discuss the topic of skills is in the European Commission communication »Rethinking Education«. The communication states that investment in education and training for skills development is essential to boost growth and competitiveness, skills determine Europe's capacity to increase productivity and that, in the long-term skills can trigger innovation and growth, move production up the value chain, stimulate the concentration of higher level skills in the EU and shape the future labour market.

In 2010, the Modernisation agenda (European Commission) highlighted the importance of stimulating the development of entrepreneurial, creative and innovation skills in all disciplines and in all three cycles. It placed emphasis on the use of skills and growth projections and graduate employment data in course design, delivery and evaluation and in adapting quality assurance and funding mechanisms to reward success in equipping students for the labour market (2011: 5). In addition, the involvement of employers and labour market institutions in the design and delivery of programmes, as well as strengthening the partnership between higher education institutions and businesses was given attention to better attune the curricula to the labour market needs and reach excellence.

The year before, in 2010, The Agenda for New Skills and Jobs was published. The initiative was meant to support the goal of having 75% of the working age population across the EU in work by 2020. The part that concerns higher education includes steps to equip people with the right skills for the job market of today and tomorrow.

> »All EU citizens should have the opportunity to acquire and develop the mix of knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to succeed in the labour market. To this end, education and training systems must deliver the right mix of skills, including digital and transversal key competences, media literacy, and communication in a foreign language. They must also ensure that young people, graduating from secondary and tertiary education, possess the skills and competences needed to make a rapid and successful transition to employment.«

Additionally, in close relation to higher education, the communication discussed matching people's skills and job opportunities, and promoting entrepreneurship, self-employment and innovation.

The reasons behind the various communications and initiatives link to the discussion on skills mismatch and over qualification of graduates. Hence the need to forecast skills has also become topical over the few past years. What do these trends imply? Could skills forecasting tackle the mismatch or prevent the over qualification of graduates? What actually lies behind these phenomena?

SKILLS MISMATCH

It is not always about the lack of demand. In 2010 and 2011 high unemployment levels co-existed with increased difficulties in filling vacancies (EU 2011d). This points to mismatches in the labour market, which can be due to inadequate skills, limited geographic mobility and inadequate wage conditions. Therefore it is important to note which factors influence the mismatches while discussing skills and the mismatch existing today.

Skills mismatch is created by a number of components. It is the outcome of the complex interplay between the supply and demand of skills within a market economy, both of which are constantly affected by adjustment lags and market failures and are shaped by the contextual conditions prevailing (e.g. demographics, technological progress, institutional settings) (EU 2012e).

Mismatches can also be created by the lack of flexibility in education and training systems, for instance due to slowness or unwillingness of educational institutions to respond to labour market signals, inadequate skills guidance, insufficient validation of non-formal and informal learning and inadequate continuing training at company and sector level. It is generally believed that the mismatch has increased as an outcome of the crisis, when in reality the mismatch has remained quite stable (at around 20%) between 2000 and 2010, despite the growing participation rates and massification of higher education. This suggests that over-qualification rates are influenced more by labour market structures and the lack of innovation than by the growing number of students.

Hence the forecasting of skills and reforming higher education according to the needs of the labour market and skills predictions should be carefully rethought. According to Cedefop (2012a), temporary, over-education is not necessarily a problem. Better-qualified people have a better chance of keeping a job and, once in employment, they may be more innovative and change the nature of the job they are doing. Highly skilled people may also find it easier to transfer skills gained in one sector to a job in another. The OECD study in adults' skills suggests that the higher the level of education is, the higher the level of skills is. This in return enhances one's level of trust in others; political efficacy or the sense of influence on the political process; participation in associative, religious, political or charity activities (volunteering); and self-assessed health status.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that generally speaking, obtaining a higher education degree is to the benefit of the individual, society and labour market. Rather than looking at the exact numbers of graduates in each field, the focus should be on the type of skills, or competences, that seem to enhance the opportunities for

finding work, regardless of the study background. Those graduating from generally oriented programmes have a lower likelihood of finding a good match in their first job and of staying in that job compared to vocationally educated (EU 2012e). However, it is possible that their education provides the kinds of transferable skills that towards getting better matched and higher-skilled jobs in the long term. This underlines the necessity for education and training systems that avoid developing curricula that are overly specific and which are useful in only a limited range of occupations.

A RIGHT SET OF SKILLS?

However, the labour market is not static and the »right« skills change over time and in different places (Cedefop 2012a). While the demand for a specific set of skills is linked closely to the changes that happen in the economy, the supply of skills is driven by different economic and social incentives, choices made by schools, students and even their parents. Labour demand is also a reflection of labour supply (Acemoglu 2002 quoted in EU 2012e). When there are highly skilled workers available, companies are encouraged and enabled to adopt new technologies and ways of working. So it can be argued, that the increasing education level of a work force can in itself be a factor leading in the increase of demand for highly skilled labour (EU 2013a). OECD notes that better cognitive and interpersonal skills are going to be required more in the future, but making more detailed projections at the occupational or industrial level are difficult. According to OECD, projections can be used to provide additional information, but shouldn't be used for detailed manpower planning. (2012:21)

It is, however important to note, when discussing developing labour markets, that jobs good for national or regional development are not the same everywhere, as is noted by the World Bank (2012a). For this reason, one cannot take for example, the European level skills forecasts as a given and apply them in every country. Even though they provide a general picture of the direction in which Europe is heading, countries and regions in Europe are arguably in different situations when it comes to the structure of their economies and needs of their markets. This is also highlighted by the fact that in the UK and the Netherlands the greatest share of shortages of skilled labour is observed in the financial and non-market services sectors, whereas in Italy, Portugal and the Eastern and Central European countries skill and labour shortages are more pronounced in the manufacturing sector (EU 2012e).

There are a few examples of countries where the governments have stopped forecasting and increased the intake for higher education. Denmark for example has set a target of 60% higher education attainment by 2020 and 95% of upper secondary level education (2011). In addition to Denmark, Luxembourg, Ireland and France have set higher targets than the EU's 40% (66%, 60% and 50% respectively) (EU 2012c.) This proves how countries have to realize, that in order to stay competitive, and to ensure both the

economic and social well-being of their nations, a high percentage of the population should be highly educated.

Another way of looking at the future skills needs is to take as a basis the interests of students, not the often narrower view of today's labour market. HEIs should, according to OECD IMHE discussions (2012), offer a portfolio of possibilities instead of a tube of courses. HEIs should try to match possibilities with the passions and abilities of students. As Conor King, the Executive Director of Innovative Research Universities of Australia said »individual choice is the best guide of forecasting future needs.« According to Jesper Risom, Head of Section at the Danish Agency for Universities and Internationalisation, Denmark has dropped the forecasting effort, and leaves it to students and employers to figure out what to do and study.

SKILLS STRATEGIES TO RESPOND THE PERCEIVED NEEDS?

The EU has been recommending that the member states develop skills strategies or corresponding national agendas to address the current needs through several policies and strategies (i.e. ET2020, New Skills for New Jobs, Agenda for Growth and Jobs, YouthPack). The following countries have such a strategy in place, according to the SAGE survey: Finland, Denmark, Lithuania, Cyprus, Spain, Serbia, Ireland, Portugal.

Out of the participants that indicated a national skill strategy, they all specified the content. In each case of giving examples the respondent stated that the strategy includes language courses (1), professional skill classes (1), optional courses for students (1) and skill based learning (1). One respondent mentioned that they have a strategy carried out by the ministry of higher education about innovation in society and in research in order to foster employability. In the case of Portugal, the higher education institutions recognize and validate the skills and competencies gained through non-formal education, i.e. through the lifelong learning office at the University of Lisbon.

In order for such plans and strategies to make an impact, appropriate resources need to be planned and budgeted for the action lines. The most crucial target groups are those that have not accessed education, employment or training and face the highest chance of exclusion in the society. Educating or up-skilling during a period where employment is scarce contributes to making sure abilities are not wasted but developed and this is what such strategies should aim for. The strategies should also include measures for graduates that are not in employment.

EXPECTATIONS AND RELEVANT SKILLS FROM THE STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

The expectations one has towards his/her education, makes up the basis and aspiration for the study choice, which is directly linked to the motivation to choose a certain study field or programme. The expectations one has concern both the outcome; what options the completed degree will open up for the individual, the personal gain and interest, the specific knowledge and skills one will acquire and how the chosen higher education institution will respond to the different expectations of the student. The wider society, namely the stakeholders of higher education, all have their own expectations towards the same degree, often focusing on the type of skills or competences a degree offers. What are then the relevant skills higher education graduates should obtain?

The different stakeholders, or interest groups, each have their opinion on what the skills are that are most needed or important for graduates' to acquire during their studies. The groups that will be given a closer look in this section include the higher education institutions, employers and representatives of students. The students' perception of the employers' and higher education institutions' opinions on relevant skills for finding employment was asked and is described below. As the question was open-ended, the skills mentioned vary according to the stakeholder group.

Respondents themselves valued social skills (teamwork, social aspects) (14 mentions) and work and practical experiences (study jobs, internships) almost as equally important (13 mentions). These two categories ranked as the most important type of skills. These were followed by communication and presentation skills with 9 responses out of 73, language skills with 7 mentions, hard skills with 5 mentions, mobility and autonomy, entrepreneur skills, learning from prior experiences were all given two mentions. IT skills, academic skills, skills gained from social and political activities, organization skills and having low financial demands were each ranked as least important.

The respondents thought higher education institutions value skills in the following way: hard skills (knowledge, good grades, degrees, short study time) was rated as the most important by 16 mentions, good theoretical knowledge as the second most important with 10 mentions. Methodological skills, work experience/internships, academic skills, language skills, and hard work/effectiveness were all mentioned 4–5 times. Other types of skills mentioned include technical skills (2), critical thinking (2), independence (1), time management (1), competitiveness (1), entrepreneurship (1) and self-learning skills (1).

As for the labour market, the following skills are important in the opinion of the student representatives: work experience (13 mentions), social skills/networking (8), knowledge (6), communication/presentation skills (6), language skills (5), punctual-

ity/availability (3), the right attitude (3), technical knowledge (IT) (3), independence (2), inter-cultural skills (2), academic skills (2), entrepreneur skills (2), creativity (2), organization skills (2), flexibility (1), critical thinking (1), extracurricular activities (1), driver's license (1) and proactivity (1).

As a general conclusion, it can be found that for students' social skills and soft skills in general seem to play a bigger role than for higher education institutions and the labour market. For the latter two groups, hard skills and work experience are the most important, according to the student representatives' opinions. It is important to explore the perceptions of students because such beliefs may have an impact on the choice students' make concerning different study courses, optional studies, whether they engage in volunteer activities and what kind of topics and subjects they decide to focus on during their studies. Offering ways to reach the skills that the students' value, contribute to their motivation and successful completion of studies.

PRACTICE MEETS REALITY?

To follow up the question regarding the relevancy and importance placed for different types of skills, the respondents were asked what the employers and higher education institutions do in practice to promote the ideas or policies they think are important when it comes to the skills' development.

The respondents saw that students themselves mostly would favour attending extra-curricular activities and soft skill courses (13 mentions), do internships (9), do volunteer work (7), study hard and follow normal lectures/seminars (7), engage in additional self-studies (5). A few respondents mentioned that it is worthwhile to work next to the studies (4), try to meet employers/networking (3), engage in student activism (1) and learn languages (1) to acquire such skills that are relevant to their future.

The respondents stated that higher education institutions should do the following to follow up their requirement of skills: improve the regular teaching (8 mentions), offer extracurricular activities (7), offer more career offices/career fairs (5), offer more internships (4), offer extra lectures (4), do regular quality assessment (4), have a better recruiting process for new students (3), work better together with the labour market (3), offer more mobility programs (3), have a more flexible curriculum (1), offer inter-disciplinary studies (1) and new study fields (1).

The respondents saw that the labour market should do the following to follow up what they valued the most, being work life experience. Plausible ideas would include offering internships in their organisation (11), offering introductory training/trainee programs/career programs for new employees (8), cooperating together with the higher education institutions and government to improve relevance of HE (7), hiring students (5), engaging in more quality assurance (2), promote language courses (1), promote a healthy work environment (1), improve the attitudes towards students (1), come to career fairs (1) or offer visits to their company (1).

fig. 15 *What should labour market do to follow up students' requirements of skills?*
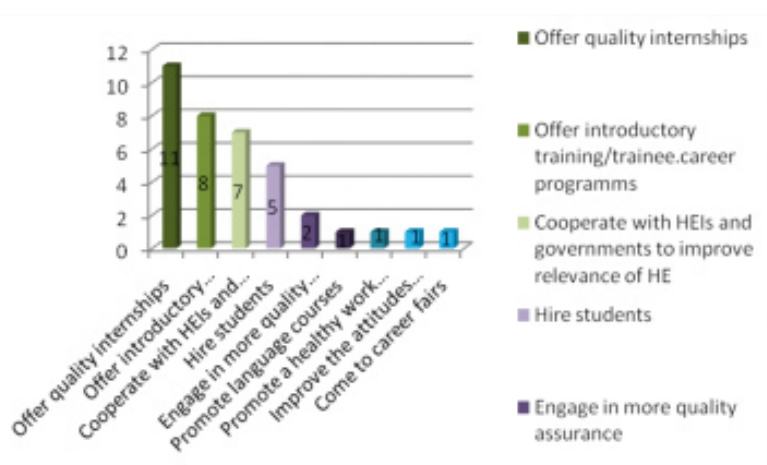
Most of the respondents think that regular education is not sufficient to meet all the expectations and demands students and the society set. Students, universities and also the labour market should promote and take into account the extra skills gained through internships, course and work experience. The quality of the regular teaching should be improved and the quality assessed to improve student opportunities.

A Flash Eurobarometer survey (Flash Eurobarometer 2010) looking into employers' perceptions of graduate employability found that skills and capabilities ranked as being »very important«, graduate recruiters were most likely to highlight the importance of team working (67%), sector-specific skills, communication skills, computer literacy, being able to adapt to new situations, first-class ability in reading/writing, and analytical and problem-solving skills (all 58–62%).

In a project aiming to contribute to the development of the learning outcomes approach and student workload measurement of the Bologna process, employers, graduates and academics were asked to rank different skills or competencies in order of perceived importance. Also there, as in the Flash Eurobarometer survey, the so called generic competencies, such as capacity for analysis and synthesis, capacity to apply knowledge into practice, capacity to learn etc. featured prominently. Interestingly, both graduates and employers regarded the basic general knowledge of the subject matter further down the list, behind many of the generic competencies, whereas academics ranked it at the top of the list.

HOW ARE THE STUDENTS' EXPECTATIONS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN THE PLANNING OF THE STUDIES?

The personal aspirations to choose a certain study programme vary from one individual to another. The participants were asked whether they are aware of any mechanisms where students are asked about their expectations towards their degree. 41.1% said that there are mechanisms in place in their country but a larger portion, 58.9%, were not aware of any mechanisms. No gender differences or study status differences were found for this question. Also the duration of working at a students' union had no influence on the question. When it comes to the type of mechanisms, questionnaires that are assessed at the universities were mostly used. Sometimes discussions and interviews are done also or personal study plans are made. Career consultations and student advisory services were mentioned only by two respondents.

It is alarming that nearly 60% stated that they are not aware of any mechanisms that ask for the students' expectations towards their studies. Can the study contents be sufficiently planned if students do not get to express their expectations? Are the personal wishes of individuals seen as something that should only be discussed when the individual demands to, but the space is not given by default?

IS THE SATISFACTION OF STUDENTS MEASURED?

The respondents were asked whether they are aware of any studies where the satisfaction of students towards their education would be measured, either on institutional or national level. A third (32.9%) of the respondents answered that they were aware of studies on both levels. 23% knew of studies on institutional level, and 16.4% were aware of studies only at national level. Almost a fifth, 17.8%, were not aware of any studies whatsoever.

According to the findings of study visits to 11 countries and 23 institutions conducted by EUA (2011:32), many institutions highlighted the importance of tracking not only their progression path but also the students' experience, through surveys, course eval-

uations or focus group interviews. Beyond support to individual students or groups of students, there was a focus on institutional development in various areas, such as the development of teaching and learning (courses and programmes), improvement of services and facilities, and the enhancement of quality assurance, governance and management approaches. In essence, this amounted to improving the quality of the overall student experience, as well as of teaching and learning. In many institutions, tracking of the progression path of students and of their experience were very closely interrelated and the distinction between the two activities was blurred.

If both the expectations of students and later on, the satisfaction and how the expectations were met, were measured, the effective planning to answer to the needs of the students would be made easier. Both types of information are needed to understand the interrelatedness and cause-effect relationship of the factors that influence successful study completion.

PLANNING OF PERSONAL STUDIES

Personal study planning refers to long-term planning of the studies. Typically it includes planning of the content, extent and duration of the studies. It takes into account how and when the student plans on completing certain parts of the studies, whether they would like to go on a mobility period, and what might affect the completion of studies. The skills students gain are the same as the competences or learning outcomes, which is all a part of what one wishes to acquire over their study time. Hence personal study planning is needs to be taken into account when discussing how learning outcomes and the students' aspirations can and will be met.

 In order to see the extent of personal study planning across Europe, the respondents were asked whether they have during their studies been asked by the institution to make study plans or set goals for their studies. 42.5% said that they have been asked to make study plans. The majority, 57.5% said that they have not been asked to make such plans. Neither the gender, study status nor active years at the students' union had an influence on the answer. There seems to be no difference between the frequency of study planning on the bachelor and master level.

When asked to specify the type of study planning, some said that this took place right at the beginning of their studies, others mentioned that this took place when they had to choose a specific study direction such as in choosing the elective subjects or master program. At times the planning takes place when a new study period or phase in the studies begins. One said that this is obligatory every year. Some stated that this is done online and some did focus groups or had trainings or discussions.

From the responses it can be concluded that no uniform way of conducting study planning takes place, and it is understood in various ways. Whether one is required to plan for the whole duration of their studies or only at the time of choosing electives, are two very different matters. The link between the planning of one's own studies and the successful completion of studies, should be researched in order to know the real effect such a method could have on the completion of studies. It could be assumed that when one has the option to choose and plan the conduct of their studies and is required to reflect on the choices they have, in return one's motivation increases.

4.12 INITIATIVES ON ENHANCEMENT OF GRADUATES' EMPLOYABILITY

We investigated practices, initiatives, plans or policies that exist on the national level because they are the concrete way in which employability is enhanced and promoted. In most of the countries such approaches exist and contribute to graduates' employability.

Internships are the most used but there are many others, like career centres in the universities, visits to companies, work-related studies, extracurricular activities, arranging seminars about the subject of employment for students and businesses and collecting data about the graduates. There are also projects on national and European levels bringing different interest groups together to develop the employability of young people. In some countries the funding of HEIs is based partly on employment of graduates.

Internships have to be approached with care. Although these are quite popular among employers, higher education institutions and students, it has to be made clear that interns must not be treated as cheap labour. Quality mechanisms have to make sure that internships' provision complies with the Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships, mentioned earlier in the publication. When asked to report if the quality mechanisms for internships exist in their national contexts, students replied positive in 11 cases and negative in 29 cases. Quality of internships is ensured in Ireland, the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden, Portugal, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, while there is no quality framework for internships in Croatia, Belgium, Switzerland, Belarus, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Estonia, Romania, Serbia, Armenia, Germany, Norway and Denmark. Internships are paid in Macedonia in all fields, while in 29 answers only in some fields. In Norway, Sweden, Serbia, Portugal, Hungary, Lithuania, Ukraine, Belarus and Belgium, internships are not paid at all.

In Belarus, Ukraine, Lithuania and Macedonia, internships are a mandatory part of curriculum, while in Finland, the Netherlands, Germany, Portugal, Armenia, Serbia, Estonia, Hungary, Spain and Bulgaria; only some universities integrate internships into the curriculum. However, even though internships are not included fully into the curriculum, they are still recognised by majority of institutions.

An interesting fact is that students report a vast lack of internships, what they become aware of upon their search for the practical experience in the field of studies. Only four student representatives, out of 73 said that the provision of internships is sufficient. 14 said that it is sufficient for only certain fields of studies (i.e. Engineering, Business Administration, Economic studies). 22 student representatives reported lack of internships.

In addition to employability related practices and policies there are also practices and policies more directly linked with the employment of graduates. Among these are the Youth Guarantee, incentives for the employers to employ graduates, incentives for the graduates to start a business and projects to get young people employed.

We investigated initiatives on the national level and gathered substantial information on who initiates these, for what purposes and how successfully. The initiatives were mostly started by the state (19 answers), HEIs (17) or students (18). In nine instances the initiatives were started by the private sector, in four by the labour unions and in seven by the employers.

SUCCESS AND APPRECIATION OF THE INITIATIVES BY DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS

The success of the initiatives seems to be mixed. In six countries (Hungary, Latvia, Norway, Romania, Spain and Sweden) they have been working as planned. In eight countries (Armenia, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Ireland, Netherlands, Portugal and Ukraine) they haven't been a full success. In eight countries (Belarus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Lithuania, Macedonia and Switzerland) there seems not to be enough information about this. One of the reasons for the latter result seems to be that the initiatives have not been fully implemented and the effects cannot be measured yet.

There may also be a problem with the aim of the initiatives. For example in Finland the Youth Guarantee doesn't cover University graduates so even if the initiative serves the other young people the graduates don't get the benefits. In some countries there are more possibilities to get entrepreneurial experience.

In most countries the initiatives are at least somewhat appreciated by the employers. In five countries (Belgium, Latvia, Portugal, Serbia and Sweden) they are fully appreciated and not at all appreciated in four (Armenia, Estonia, Romania and Ukraine). There is no data on the matter from four countries.

Students seem to appreciate the initiatives about as much as the employers. In most answers they are somewhat appreciated by the students, fully in seven countries (Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Portugal, Serbia, Spain and Sweden) and not at all only in Armenia.

According to most of the answers the initiatives are able to prepare the graduates for the labour market. In eight countries (Armenia, Belgium, Denmark, Norway) they are not. Also here seems to be the lack of information about the effects of the initiatives.

In 19 countries students' unions reported initiatives for facilitating graduates' entry to the labour market, in seven countries (Belarus, Bulgaria, Estonia, Germany, Lithuania, Serbia and Sweden) there are none. The initiatives are for example:

- ⟳ Subsidized employment after graduation

- ⟳ Cooperation with the third sector

- ⟳ Career centres in employment offices and universities

- ⟳ Collaboration of companies and universities

- ⟳ Career days

- ⟳ Research and development projects and internships

Most often these initiatives have been started by the universities (14 countries). In 11 countries they have been initiated by students and in 12 by the state. In many countries there are either initiatives that have been started by several parties together or several initiatives started by different parties. The initiatives have been fairly successful, in twelve countries at least some of them have been working as planned but in five at least some of them have failed in one way or another. Also here many answered that they don't know. In 13 countries the students are more prepared for the labour market due to the initiatives. Employers appreciate the initiatives and efforts made by the state, universities and students in most of the countries. Only in Croatia, communication between different sectors, thus relevance of initiatives and efforts, has been scarce.

There are career centres in universities in 21 countries, in three (Belarus, Belgium, Macedonia) there are none. According to the answers to the survey they typically organise career fairs, facilitate contact between students and employers in different ways, give guidance and help students improve their job seeking skills. In addition to these they share information on available jobs and internships, give lectures on the acquisition of a job, help the foreign students to find work and organise information campaigns. It seems that in most of the countries students are happy with the career centres. In only a few countries they seem not to be active or the support to graduates is not of good quality.

The initiatives have been fairly successful, in 12 countries at least some of them have been working as planned but in 5 at least some of them have failed in one way or another. It should be noted that many students are not aware of success of the initiatives.

4.13 COOPERATION OF STAKEHOLDERS REGARDING ENHANCEMENT OF EMPLOYABILITY

In order to grasp employability in all its meanings, it is necessary to be reminded of the diversity of types of higher education institutions and programmes; complex and changing labour markets and diverse needs of graduates and employers, and hold on to them. The European Higher Education Area has been promoting cooperation and open discussion with different stakeholders, on higher education reforms, in order to facilitate harmonisation of diverse educational systems. Cooperation of institutions, graduates, employers, students, teachers, governments, organisations and other sectors of education (i.e. primary, general secondary, VET, adult education) needs to take place, when discussing and making decisions over enhancement of employability. Employability is a dynamic process influenced by the versatility of factors that come from inside and outside education, thus »if any of the stakeholders is left out, the complexity of the issue will not be fully addressed and some problems may be overlooked (i.e. readability of qualifications by employers)« (Vukasović, 2006)[28].

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28 Vukasović., M. (July 2006). EUA Bologna Handbook: Making Bologna Work. Deconstructing and Reconstructing Employability. RAABE-Losevl.-Ausg, 2006. An electronic version available at *http://books.google.hu/books?id=mxNFkhZXUisC&pg=RA1-PA22&lpg=RA1-PA22&dq=martina+vukasovic+employability&source=bl&ots=1ATEGCkMzg&sig=0iHs4VEMEiPwE8nVFkteB3JAVGQ&hl=en&sa=X&ei=fN2bU5OGCfGa1AW_44CADg&ved=0CDQQ6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=martina%20vukasovic%20employability&f=false*

5 CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOM-MENDATIONS

Narrow definitions of employability, that focus on short term goals, individual benefits and education as a private good, undermine the key role that higher education plays in the democratic development of the society. Misconceptions of employability hinder the development of academic values in higher education and are a threat because they encourage increased commodification and privatisation within the system. These two concepts are quite similar and both of them stand for the instrumentalisation and the changing perception of education, to be purely an economic factor and a resource for prosperity.

The consequences of these threats are elitist approaches to higher education, reflecting in cuts to the national budgets for education, introductions of tuition fees and limited access to higher education.[29] When swingeing budget cuts pressure higher education institutions to perform more with less, they have to justify the different purposes that they serve. Whether that is training people for active citizenship, facilitating social mobility, improving skills needed in the labour market or conducting high-quality research, these activities are weighted against one another in a competition for funds and in creating a more efficient education system.[30] One can't help but wonder about true efficiency of such educational system, its sustainability and ability to serve multiple, concomitant purposes.

Employability With Students' Eyes, depicts a broad concept of employability which is about subject-specific, methodological, social and individual competences which enable graduates to successfully take up and pursue a profession/employment and empower their lifelong-learning. Employability is also about making graduates more likely to gain employment in their chosen field(s), being able to create/start new businesses, and being able to develop and succeed in their occupations.

Employability does not mean matching educational and labour markets, companies defining contents and teaching methods, training the routines of everyday work nor

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29 Frederiksen, M.T., and Vuksanovic, N. (13 July 2013). Graduate Employability and the Social Good. University World News, issue: 280. An electronic version available at *http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20130712101919518*

30 Moisander., T. (20 April 2013). Graduate unemployment—whose fault is it? University World News, issue: 268. An electronic version available at *http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20130419155742341*

pure life experience. Employable higher education graduates have a qualification with knowledge of the theories and methods of the discipline; are able to apply their knowledge on the job in order to assess and solve problems; are able to develop new qualifications; have acquired relevant soft skills; and are able to recognise their own training needs. (ESU, 2014)[31]

The publication also strengthens the argument that employability cannot be fixed in a one-time effort (Vukasović, 2006)[32] but it has to be constantly enhanced and adapted to the needs of the society.

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31 The European Students' Union (April 2014). Policy Paper on Quality of Higher Education. Section on Employability and Entrepreneurship. An electronic version available at *http://esu. ukmsl.net/news/article/6064/2013-Policy-paper-on-quality-of-higher-education/*

32 Vukasović., M. (July 2006). EUA Bologna Handbook: Making Bologna Work. Deconstructing and Reconstructing Employability. RAABE-Losevl.-Ausg, 2006. An electronic version available at *http://books.google.hu/books?id=mxNFkhZXUisC&pg=RA1-PA22&lpg=RA1-PA22&dq=martina+vukasovic+employability&source=bl&ots=1ATEGCkMzg&sig=0iHs4VEMEiPwE8nVFkteB3JAVGQ&hl=en&sa=X&ei=fN2bU5OGCfGa1AW_44CADg&ved=0CDQQ6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=martina%20vukasovic%20employability&f=false*

6 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1 **The difference between employability (ability to learn; ability to gain employment) and employment (an actual acquisition of a job)** should always be kept in mind, in discussions and decision making processes on European, national and institutional levels.

2 **Employability should always be defined in a broad sense,** taking into account factors from the outside as well as from the inside of higher education (e.g. outside factors: labour market, socio-economic background and demographics of a person, inside factors: Bologna tools that influence employability, such as qualifications frameworks, learning outcomes, ECTS, Diploma Supplement).

3 **Higher education has multiple, concomitant purposes and all should be reflected in a higher education reform:**

   a Preparing for employment;

   b Preparing for life as active citizens in democratic societies;

   c Personal development;

   d The development and maintenance of a broad, advanced knowledge base.

   Higher education should not be designed to match the labour market needs, but should rather be tailored according to the needs of the society as a whole.

4 **Recognise and always keep in mind complexity and diversity of educational programmes, disciplines and professions when discussing enhancement of employability of graduates.** Research oriented universities, for example, will have a different approach to employability than Vocational Education and Training.

5 **Improve compatibility and coherence of different segments of education (i.e. primary, general secondary, VET, higher education, adult education) while exploring possibilities for permeability between VET and higher education.** ESU invites countries to seek connection and correlation between Vocational Education and Training (VET), Applied Sciences and Higher Education systems in order to make access from one system to another smoother.

6 **The link between employability and social dimension should be strengthened** by opening access to and improving success within higher education, for students and learners coming from underrepresented demographics. Bearing in mind that tertiary education graduates have more success in gaining employment than graduates from other educational contexts, opening access to higher education will improve socio-economic standard of people as well.

7 St**udents should be actively involved in further implementation, self-certification and referencing of National Qualifications Frameworks as well as in further developments of QF-EHEA and the EQF-LLL.** It is important to recognise all specificities of two different frameworks and work on their compatibility rather than on a merger. The role of qualifications frameworks in recognition—for both educational and employment-related purposes—needs to be better identified, especially in those countries that have until now put various obstacles in the face of academic recognition.

8 **Awarding of the ECTS should happen based on the estimation of workload and formulation of learning outcomes.** Credit systems can be beneficial for achieving more transparency and compatibility between different educational structures. Taking the student workload and learning outcomes as the basis of credit allocation represents a change of paradigms and is essential for implementing the student-centred learning approach. Currently, credit allocation is often based upon the teaching input, which often has consequences for the duration of a study programme. The actual student workload necessary to successfully complete part of a study programme is often neglected.

9 **Learning outcomes should be fully implemented and students involved in the design of programme and intended learning outcomes and in discussions and decision making on assessment methods and criteria.** Learning outcomes should be clearly and transparently defined within the frameworks of broadly recognised learning and educational theory while taking into account the existence of many different types of learning pertaining to all aspects of human life and development.

10 **Student-Centred Learning should be fully endorsed and implemented.** In order to enhance employability, SCL approach that empowers active student participation in curriculum design and internal quality assurance of teaching, learning and assessment activities must be fully endorsed and implemented by higher education institutions.

11 **Diploma Supplement should be issued to students automatically upon graduation or upon request before graduation; it should be written in one of the widely spoken languages (i.e. English, French, German) and free of charge.** Students have the right to receive documentation explaining the qualifications gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, cycle/level and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed. This certification should be automatically issued upon graduation (the so-called Diploma Supplement developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO-CEPES and confirmed in the Lisbon Convention) or upon request before graduation, but always free of charge and following a standardised model.

12 **Automatic recognition of academic, comparable degrees should be fully endorsed, however, not at the expense of autonomy of higher education institutions.** It is essential for ESU that the recognition of comparable degrees is guaranteed and granted automatically, free of charge, in all EHEA countries based on the tools already developed within the Bologna Process. ESU, having regard of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, considers that there should be automatic recognition of comparable degrees between those EHEA countries that have already fully implemented the Bologna structural reforms (three-cycle system, ECTS, national qualification framework -aligned to the QF-EHEA-, quality assurance agency registered in EQAR, automatic issuing of the Diploma Supplement), as there would not be any substantial differences.

13 **Recognition of Prior Learning and Student Portfolio System should be fully endorsed by the institutions.** ESU stresses that recognition of prior learning should be available for the purpose of gaining entry to a certain education programme, as well as for gaining recognition of certain parts of an education programme due to already achieved learning outcomes (e.g. courses or modules; comparable to academic recognition of study abroad periods). Credit assignment should be correlated to the achievement of learning outcomes. Therefore credits must be granted for achievements in prior learning and especially for competencies resulting from professional experiences. Students should have the right to have their prior learning evaluated by higher education institutions and/or recognition authorities. A portfolio refers to a way of displaying the competences one has gained prior to seeking admittance to higher education, or alternatively, to the working life.

14 **Higher education should not abandon development of generic skills (i.e. critical thinking, problem solving, the ability to learn independently and with understanding).** It should continuously respond to the societal needs, citizenship and personal development, regardless of the pressure caused by swingeing budget cuts and requests for narrowing the scope and purposes of higher education to subject specific, ›key‹ or ›core‹ skills and competences for the labour market.

15 **Develop mechanisms that ask for students' expectations towards their studies** in order to improve relevance of the disciplines and programmes of the studies for current and prospective students.

16 **Cooperation of stakeholders** and higher education institutions can be useful for the enhancement of employability, but must be approached with care. Stakeholders can contribute with important knowledge and participate in discussions about the design and delivery of higher education programmes, but the decision-making power must always rest with institutions.

17 **Educational quality or success of higher education institutions shouldn not be measured in terms of employment.** There shouldn't exist any attempt whatsoever to measure educational quality or success in terms of employment or income statistics—while important, these do not provide an accurate reflection of quality in higher education.

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8   GLOSSARY

Employability It is a broad concept which includes subject-specific, methodological, social and individual competences which enable graduates to successfully take up and pursue a profession/employment and empower their lifelong-learning. Employability is also about making graduates more likely to gain employment in their chosen field(s), being able to create/start new businesses, and being able to develop and succeed in their occupations.

Europe/European refers to those countries that are signatories to the Bologna Declaration, whilst 'national' is used to describe the contexts within each of those countries or education systems.

Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area An overarching framework that makes transparent the relationship between European national higher education frameworks of qualifications and the qualifications they contain. It is an articulation mechanism between national frameworks.

European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) It provides a common reference framework which assists in comparing the national qualifications systems, frameworks and their levels.

National Qualifications Framework The single description, at national level or a particular level of an education system, which clarifies and explains the relationship between higher education qualifications. National qualifications frameworks are internationally understood and clearly describe all qualifications and other learning achievements in higher education and relate them coherently to each other.

Qualification descriptors Generic statements of the learning outcomes of study. They provide clear points of reference that describe the main outcomes of a qualification often with reference to national levels.

Qualification Any degree, diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of a recognised programme of study. Qualifications are expressed in terms of learning outcomes.

Learning Outcomes Statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process. Achievement of learning outcomes has to be assessed through procedures based on clear and transparent criteria.

Competence The state or quality of being adequately or well qualified. It is a combination of knowledge, understanding, skills, abilities and attitudes, and can be generic or subject–specific.

Skills Developed talent or ability.

Soft skills Skills that are acquired through practical learning and seen as interdisciplinary, such as team work, conflict management or communication skills.

Hard skills Skills leading to a professional competence in the study subject area and to the relevant qualification for a specific job/career.

Transversal or general skills Skills that can be applied in all academic subject areas, and in all educational, career, and civic settings throughout an individual's life (i.e. critical thinking, problem solving, the ability to learn independently and with understanding). These skills may have been acquired through non-work or leisure activities or through participation in education or training.

Internship, work placement Supervised practical training, which can be paid or unpaid. It may be a mandatory part of the study programme or take place upon the student's choice. The length may vary from a few weeks to several months.

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) It refers to a set of practices and procedures that can be used by a higher education institution to assess and recognise the prior learning of a student (learning that occurred in an informal or non-formal educational environment, or practical experience).

Flexibility Refers to measures through which the provision of higher education is made more flexible

Diploma Supplement An annex to the official qualification documentation, which is designed to provide more detailed information on the studies completed according to an agreed format which is internationally recognised.

Automatic recognition It refers to a process where students' certificates would not need to go through an assessment of equivalence with national qualifications, but which could be checked for authenticity and award by a recognised institution within the EHEA, to ensure authenticity of the degree and its award by a recognised higher education institution.

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.

Student Refers to all learners seeking a qualification in higher education.

Learner An individual engaged in a learning process.

Multiple purposes of HE The notion of higher education having several purposes in society. These include preparing students for employment; preparing students for life as active citizens in democratic societies; personal development and the development and maintenance of a broad, advanced knowledge base.

Commodification A situation when education markets are established through the instrumentalisation of education and the changing perception of education as purely an economic factor rather than a tool for social development. It is when the perception of higher education changes from being a public good and public responsibility to a private and limited commodity.

Privatisation A tendency of higher education institutions to take on operational norms associated with private enterprises.

9   ABBREVIATIONS

ATHENS Advanced Technology Higher Education Network

BFUG Bologna Follow-Up Group

BWSE Bologna With Student Eyes

CEDEFOP European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

CESAER Conference of European Schools for Advanced Engineering Education and Research

CLUSTER Consortium Linking Universities of Science and Technology for Education and Research

CMU Carnegie Mellon University

CoE Council of Europe

CVT Continuing Vocational Training

DS Diploma Supplement

DUO Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

EAR European Area of Recognition

EC European Commission

ECTS European Credit Transfer and Accreditation System

EEA European Economic Area

EHEA European Higher Education Area

EPFL Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne

EQAR European Quality Assurance Register

EQF/EQF-LLL European Qualifications Framework for life-long learning

ESU European Students' Union

ET2020 Education and Training Strategy

EU European Union

EU2020 European Unions' Growth Strategy

EUA European University Association

EUROSTAT Eurostat is the statistical office of the European Union situated in Luxembourg. Its task is to provide the European Union with statistics at European level that enable comparisons between countries and regions.

EUROZONE The economic region consisted of the European Union Member States who have adopted the euro as a single currency

EWSE Employability With Students' Eyes

HE Higher Education

HEI Higher Education Institution

IBM SPSS Statistical Package for the Social Sciences of the International Business Machines Corporation

LO Learning Outcome

MAGALHÃES-SMILE is composed of a number of leading schools and universities in Science, Technology and Architecture in Latin American, Caribbean and European countries, devoted to Higher Education and scientific mobility initiatives. Based on the successful experience of the EU Socrates/Erasmus programme, The MAGALHÃES network has created the SMILE programme to allow the mobility between Latin American, Caribbean and European students.

MAXQDA is a software program designed for computer-assisted qualitative and mixed methods data, text and multimedia analysis in academic, scientific, and business institutions.

MIT Massachusetts Institute of Technology

NOKUT Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education

(N)QF (National) Qualifications Framework

Nuffic is the Netherlands' organisation for international cooperation in higher education

NUS National Union of Students

OECD Organisation of Economic Co-Operation and Development

QA Quality Assurance

QF-EHEA European Qualifications Framework for Higher Education

RPL Recognition of Prior Learning

SAGE Students' Advancement of Graduates' Employability

SCL Student-Centred Learning

T.I.M.E. Top Industrial Managers in Europe

UK United Kingdom

UNESCO-CEPES European Centre for Higher Education of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UT Austin The University of Texas at Austin

VET Vocational Education and Training

10 THE LIST OF MAPS, TABLES AND GRAPHS

11 ESU MEMBER UNIONS

Armenia Armenia National Students Association (ANSA) **Austria** Österreichische HochschülerInnenschaft (ÖH) **Azerbaijan** Azerbaijan Students Union (ASU), Azerbaijan Student Youth Organisations' Union (ASYOU) **Belarus** Belarus Student Association (BSA) **Belgium** Fédération Des Etudiants Francophones (FEF), Vlaamse Vereniging van Studenten (VVS) **Bulgaria** Barski Studentski (UBS), Nacionalno Predstavitelstvo na Studentskite Saveti v Republika Balgaria (NASC) **Bosnia & Herzegovina** Studentska Unija Republika Srpska (SURS) **Croatia** Hrvatski Studentski Zbor (CSC) **Cyprus** Pagkypria Omospondia Foititikon Enoseon (POFEN) **Czech Republic** Studentská Komora Rady (SKRVS) **Denmark** Danske Studerendes Fællesråd (DSF) **Finland** Suomen ammattikorkeakouluopiskelijakuntien liitto (SAMOK), Suomen Ylioppilaskuntien Liitto (SYL) **Estonia** Eesti Üliõpilaskondade Liit (EÜL) **France** Fédération des Associations Générales D'Etudiants (FAGE) Union Nationale des Etudiants de France (UNEF) **Georgia** Students Organizations League of Georgia (SOLG) **Germany** Freie Zusammenschluss von StudentInnenschaften (FZS) **Hungary** Hallgatói Önkormányzatok Országos Konferenciája (HÖOK) **Iceland** Stúdentaráð Háskóla Íslands (SHÍ) **Ireland** Union of Students in Ireland (USI) **Israel** National Union of Israeli Students (NUIS) **Italy** Unione degli Universitari (UDU) **Latvia** Latvijas Studentu Apvieniba (LSA) **Lithuania** Lietuvos Studentu Sajunga (LSS) **Luxembourg** Union Nationale des Etudiant(e)s du Luxembourg (UNEL), Luxembourg University Students' Organization (LUS) **Macedonia** National Union of Students of Macedonia (NUSM) **Malta** Kunsill Studenti Universitarji (KSU) **Netherlands** Interstedelijk Studenten Overleg (ISO), Landelijke Studenten Vakbond (LSVb) **Norway** Norsk studentorganisasjon (NSO) **Poland** Parlament Studentów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej (PSRP) **Portugal** Fórum Académico para a Informação e Representação Externa (FAIRe) **Romania** Alianta Nationala a Organizatiilor Studentesti din Romania (ANOSR) **Serbia** Studentska Unija Srbije (SUS), Student Conference of Serbian Universities (SKONUS) **Slovakia** Študentská Rada Vysok.ch škôl (SRVS) **Slovenia** Studenska Organizacija Slovenije (SSU) **Spain** Coordinadora de Representantes de Estudiantes de Universidades Públicas (CREUP) **Sweden** Sveriges Förenade Studentkårer (SFS) **Switzerland** Verband der Schweizerischen StudentInnenschaften, (VSS-UNES-USU) **Ukraine** Ukrainian Association of Student Self-government (UASS) **UK** National Union of Students (NUS-UK)

12   SAGE PROJECT PARTNERS

THE NATIONAL UNION OF STUDENTS IN DENMARK, DSF

DSF is the largest organisation for students in higher education in Denmark. The union has 18 member organisations (student councils) and through these, DSF represents approximately 150,000 students. The members work for the conditions of individual member institutions, whereas DSF works for the students at a national level.

UNION OF STUDENTS IN FINNISH UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES, SAMOK

SAMOK is a national interest and service organisation independently administered by students in universities of applied sciences. SAMOK is the outlook promoter of the students in universities of applied sciences and speaks on behalf of about 140,000 students, representing 26 student unions (August 2013). Through SAMOK, these students are represented to state administration and partners in higher education.

SPANISH COORDINATOR OF STUDENTS' REPRESENTATIVES OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES, CREUP

CREUP is an umbrella organisation of 23 op student representative bodies—MOREs—(as Local Students' Unions) from Spanish public universities. Through its members, CREUP represents over 800,000 students in Spain. The local student unions that are members of CREUP are open to all students in their respective higher education institutions regardless of political persuasion, religion, ethnic or cultural origin, sexual orientation or social standing. Our members are also student-run, autonomous, and representative and operate according to democratic principles.

THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STUDENTS IN HUNGARY, HÖOK

HÖOK represents nationwide 315,000 students in higher educa-
tion across Hungary. It has a right to express opinion and to
make proposals in any questions concerning higher education.
HÖOK is the largest non-governmental organisation of Hungary with a total number
of 66 members including all the student councils working at state or fully accredited
non-state Hungarian universities.

INNOVATION IN LEARNING INSTITUTE, FRIEDRICH-ALEXANDER
UNIVERSITÄT ERLANGEN-NÜRNBERG, GERMANY

ILI is a research organisation dedicated to lifelong learn-
ing and technology-enhanced learning. ILI has been in-
volved in technology-enhanced learning research and
development activities since 1976. The institute develops innovative learning systems
including pedagogy, content, support and technology, starting from user needs analy-
sis, pedagogical and technical implementation, up to evaluation and valorisation, in a
spirit of self-determined lifelong learning. ILI has an interdisciplinary team of 20 staff
members, embedded in a full scale university with about 4800 employees and 27.300
students.

NATIONAL AUTHORITY FOR QUALIFICATION, ROMANIA (ANC)

ANC is a public institution with legal personality, subordinat-
ed to the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports.
Among its main tasks and activities, it elaborates methodolo-
gies, instruments and procedures for developing and updating the National Qualifica-
tions Framework; it develops unitary criteria and procedures for the certification and
recognition of qualifications and it develops methodologies, instruments and proce-
dures for correlating the national qualifications system with the existing instruments
in the field of qualifications at European and international level.