**Peer Learning Seminar: „Tracking graduates’ career paths”**

**Concept Note**

Sharing good practice in graduate tracking, with a special focus on arrangements at national level, and discussing challenges related to the implementation of schemes ensuring reliable and meaningful information on graduates’ career patterns are the main objectives of the two-day peer learning seminar to be organized in Warsaw, 3-4 September 2015. This PLA event is organized by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education in the framework of the project Erasmus+ KA3 – Support for Policy Reform “Pursuing the Goals of the Bucharest Communique in Poland”.

The issue of tracking graduates’ career patterns is an important element of public policy in the field of higher education at national and European levels. At the last Ministerial Conference of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA; Yerevan, 14-15 May 2015), Ministers committed “to ensure, in collaboration with institutions, reliable and meaningful information on graduates’ career patterns and progression in the labour market, which should be provided to institutional leaders, potential students, their parents and society at large”.

This commitment follows one of the main conclusions from the work of the EHEA Structural Reforms Working Group, which pointed out that shortage of reliable information on graduates’ career paths is still a big challenge for the European higher education systems. This negatively affects institutional quality assurance systems – according to the revised Standards and Guidelines of Quality Assurance in the EHEA, collecting, analysing and using information on i.a. career paths of graduates is crucial for effective management of programmes and other activities. Moreover, potential students and their parents often do not have access to information significant for making informed decisions related to the choice of a particular institution or a study programme. Lack of reliable information on graduates’ career paths is problematic also for public authorities and negatively affects the quality of public debate on higher education.

Fostering the employability of graduates from higher education throughout their working lives in rapidly changing labour markets is a key concern of higher education policy-makers across Europe. Graduate tracking is an obvious tool of measuring performance in this field, supporting focus on employability in the framework of internal quality assurance and facilitating access to information on progression to the labour market, all of which are crucial for prospective students, their parents and society at large.

The diverse levels of implementation of tracking arrangements in the EHEA countries create an opportunity for dissemination of good practice among countries that have already introduced graduate tracking at national level and faced particular challenges, and countries planning to establish national tracking schemes, having less experience and seeking advice.

Most of the seminar agenda will be devoted to discussing state-of-the-art developments regarding graduate tracking arrangement in countries represented at the seminar, including legal and organisational conditions as well as methodological concerns. Methodologies of graduate tracking in particular countries to a large extent differ from each other and are based on different sources of information, including administrative data (e.g. social security data and information gathered in tax systems), census and sample surveys or interviews aiming at collecting graduates’ opinions. The scope of information gathered through tracking exercises also varies and can concern basic facts on progression in the labour market as well as extensive qualitative information on the relevance of learning outcomes achieved during studies.

Discussions will identify strengths and limitations of different methods of tracking related to issues such as comparability and reliability of gathered data, meaningfulness and comprehensiveness of information, representativeness and response biases. Participants will have an opportunity to share concerns related to legal conditions (e.g. personal data/privacy protection), organisational issues and implementation.

Sharing experience will allow for enriching the approaches to graduate tracking used in the European countries. Discussions may also contribute to the debate on a possible coherent EHEA approach to graduate tracking envisaged in the report of the EHEA Structural Reforms Working Group. It will hopefully increase trust in information on graduate career paths gathered in different national systems.

The peer learning seminar will gather 20 international participants and a maximum of 10 participants from Poland. Preference will be given to policy-makers and practitioners from countries which have introduced tracking arrangements at national level or are planning to establish such arrangements and seeking advice. Apart from that, information on the event will be sent to the Bologna Follow-up Group. The final selection of international participants will be based on a questionnaire regarding national arrangements on tracking graduates’ career paths.

The first day of the seminar will be devoted to presentations of national arrangements regarding graduate tracking in countries represented at the seminar, followed by discussions. Participants representing countries will be asked to prepare relevant presentations. Sessions on the second day (the seminar will finish at 3 p.m.) will be focused on exchanging views related to fundamental issues concerning methodology, legal conditions and organisational issues.