

Short country survey on employability among BFUG members

Response by Cyprus

What are the main challenges for your country in terms of employability? (eg Is graduate unemployment a problem? Are there restrictions on access to certain jobs? Is there a careers and guidance service?) What would help you most as an output from this working group?

According to data collected by the Statistical Service of Cyprus the percentage of higher education graduates amongst unemployed persons in Cyprus has reached 32%.¹ The percentage of secondary education graduates who pursue studies at the higher education level keeps increasing (It reached 82% in the academic year 2005 – 2006) and thus the employment market is sometimes unable to absorb the vast numbers of graduates. A solution to this problem could be the conduct of market research in an attempt to predict the needs of the employment market in a time-span of several years. Thus, counselling services would be in a position to direct secondary education graduates who wish to pursue higher education, to certain programmes of study whose learning outcomes will be better suited for the needs of the economy (Would the employability working group be in a position to provide us with constructive feedback regarding this suggestion?).

There are no restrictions on access to certain jobs provided that the relevant regulations for the professional requirements are met.

Is there a dialogue in your country between higher education institutions and employers? If so, at what level does this take place – national, regional, institutional etc? What sort of issues does it cover?

There is no formal dialogue between higher education institutions and employers. We hope that the employability working group will be able to provide us with examples of good practice from other countries regarding the provision of incentives for the establishment of such dialogue.

Can you provide two examples of good practice in your country in relation to any of the themes to be covered by the report?²

Awareness-raising amongst employers of the value of a bachelors qualification and associated learning outcomes:

Good Practices:

(1) Quality Assurance:

The external QA system of Cyprus is presently implemented in the form of the Council for Educational Evaluation and Accreditation (*SEKAP*) which conducts programme evaluation and accreditation to the programmes of the private institutions of tertiary education and KYSATS which evaluates titles of study awarded by institutions of higher education in Cyprus and abroad.

A recently established external evaluation and accreditation process is embodied in the operation of the Evaluation Committee for the establishment of private universities (the relevant law was approved in July 2005). ECPU (The Evaluation Committee for Private Universities) operates on the same principles as *SEKAP* but it also applies institutional evaluation and accreditation on private universities.

Prospective employers are made aware regarding the quality assurance mechanisms implemented at national level as well as the accreditation results as these are widely publicized by the competent authorities of the state.

¹ From "Cyprus in Figures" 2007 Edition. Published by the Statistical Service of Cyprus.

² Suggested themes to be covered in the report are:

- awareness-raising amongst employers of the value of a bachelors qualification and associated learning outcomes;
- involving employers in devising curricula;
- the provision of careers and guidance services;
- employment and career structures within the public service that are fully compatible with the new degree system;
- self-employability;
- curriculum innovation based on learning outcomes;
- the recognition of degrees in the labour market across Europe;
- the role of higher education in lifelong learning and continuing professional development.

With regard to quality assurance and based on the «Recommendation of the Council and of the European Parliament on further European Cooperation in quality assurance in Higher Education» the Council of Ministers has approved the establishment of a National Quality Assurance Agency, an independent authority responsible for both programme and institutional quality assurance in both private and public tertiary education.

(2) The provision of careers and guidance services:

All public and private Institutions of higher education as well as for secondary education provide career and guidance services to their students. These offices also organise “Career Fairs”, lectures, workshops and other events relevant to employment.

Further Information:

Involving employers in devising curricula:

Employers are not involved in the devising of curricula of institutions of higher education. It has to be highlighted however that current market trends are closely followed by institutions of higher education when devising their curricula in their attempt to secure the best learning outcomes and future employment for their graduates.

Employment and career structures within the public service that are fully compatible with the new degree system:

The degree system in Cyprus has always been based on three cycles (Bachelors, Masters, Doctorate) and for this reason employment and career structures within the public service are fully compatible with it.

The recognition of degrees in the labour market across Europe:

The Cyprus Council of Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications (KY.S.A.T.S.) is the competent authority of the Republic of Cyprus for the recognition of Higher and Tertiary Education qualifications obtained home and abroad. It also acts as the Education National Information Centre.

KYSATS recognises qualifications, such as degrees, diplomas or certificates which are issued by recognised Higher Education Institutions or by institutions, the programmes of which have been educationally evaluated-accredited. The reference of evaluation for the recognition of titles awarded are the titles (degrees) awarded by the University of Cyprus in the same discipline and the titles awarded by State Higher Education Institutions of Cyprus. KYSATS is a member of the ENIC/NARIC network.

the role of higher education in lifelong learning and continuing professional development:

Measures Implemented by Cyprus:

The Open University of Cyprus was established by Law 234(I)/2002 aiming to satisfy the demand for lifelong learning and continuing education.

The Open University, offers individuals the opportunity to pursue or complete University education in case they were not able to do so in the past. Likewise, open and distance learning offers, to those who already hold a university degree, the possibility to further their studies at a graduate level or even study different subjects aiming at career progression. Finally, the Open University through the provision of training and vocational programs offers individuals the opportunity to be kept informed about trends and concepts of interest in both professional and personal development.

Target Groups:

- Adults who wish to complete university education but did not have a chance to do so in the past
- Adults already in the workforce
- Adults who wish to improve their knowledge and skills in order to seek employment.

The Open University of Cyprus style of teaching is called “open and distance learning”. More specifically, students have the opportunity to learn in their own time and pace without having to be present at the premises of the University in order to be able to attend lectures and seminars, as it is the case with conventional universities. Thus, through its establishment and operation the Open University of Cyprus plays a catalytic role in:

- the development of human resources, and consequently of the economy
- gender equality
- social cohesion
- active citizenship