

Short country survey on employability among BFUG members

Response by Lithuania

The employability working group agreed to conduct a short country survey and that each member of the group would cover their own and two allocated countries. The members of the working group agreed to contact the members of the BFUG for the allocated countries with the following questions:

- 1) 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?

As is situation

Since 2000 rapid growth of Lithuania's economy very brightly highlighted the problems of employability and labour market in the country's economy. In 2004 from the country with surplus labour force Lithuania became the country with deficit of the labour force. The deficit of the qualified labour force in separate economy sectors is relevant till today. According to the data of the Department of Statistics the growth of the country's economy and emigration processes determined that during 2001 – 2006 the number of unemployed had reduced by 3 times (2001 – 17.4%, 2006 – 5.6 %). During this period the number of the employees working in the service sector has increased, the number of the employees working in the agriculture sector – has decreased.

Health care and social work remained feminine fields, where in 2006 women constituted 84 % of the total number of persons employed in this area; in educational institutions – 80 %. In the field of construction, electricity, gas and water supply, transport, storage and communications male employees predominated.

Unemployment rate of population aged 15-24 was higher than the general unemployment rate. Whereas population emigrating from Lithuania are mostly young people, their unemployment rate in 2006 decreased to 9.8 %, although a year ago it was 15.7 %.

Forecast of demand of specialists

From 1999 the Ministry of Education and Science implements the forecasts of the demand of specialists with higher education. Sociological survey on the competition of graduates in the labour market, in the context of supply of and demand of the labour force, was carried out. The results of the survey showed that, in the employers opinion, the country's companies face the deficit of the qualified employees, the problem of ageing of the personnel and the deficit of young employees. On the other hand, the employers were critical about theoretical as well as practical preparation of the graduates, indicating that young specialists frequently lack knowledge and competencies to successfully enter the labour market.

To satisfy the labour force deficit of the growing economy and to emphasise that it is necessary to carry out not only sociological surveys, but econometrical forecasting methods are also instrumental in order to analyse the situation, in 2008 "The Methodology of the Need of Specialists and their Preparation" for the country's institutions to versatile forecast the need of specialist was prepared and presented.

Career planning centres

The largest universities and colleges (both higher education institutions) have the professional counselling and career planning centres (9 in total), the specialist of which consult the future university students on the issues of the choice of the profession, inform the students and the school-graduates as well as Lithuanian and foreign companies on the issues of professional career, its planning, personnel management, organization of practices of young specialists, employment. They also watch career of the students, consult them on the strategy and tactics for the job search.

Various events are organised for the students: seminars of career planning, open lectures on diverse issues, Career Days. Students may get individual consultation on the job search.

In the system of professional orientation most frequently the services include professional information, professional consultation, and training for the career. Specialists, who supply with the services of professional orientation, dependant on the institution they work for, are called the consultants of professional information, counsellors of profession, career consultants, etc. However, there is no uniting system of preparation of theses specialists. Psychologists, social teachers, teachers and other persons with higher education, improving their knowledge in various specialized courses, work as consultants. Several universities and colleges in Lithuania have prepared the study programmes (ex.: Projecting of Career, Career Education), specialization of programmes or separate courses related to the sphere of professional information, professional consultation or training for the career. The training of the specialists of professional orientation, raising their qualification is frequently done while implementing various projects supported using the EU structural funds.

During 2005-2008 the development of the system of professional orientation in Lithuania was performed using the EU structural funds. At national level the Ministry of Education and Science together with partners have implemented two inter-related projects of national importance: „Design and implementation of the system of professional orientation“ and „Design and development of open information, consultation, orientation system (AIKOS)“. Due to theses projects the related normative documents (standards, methodical recommendations) were created for professional information and professional consultation, also, various training programmes and methods for the specialist of professional orientation (counsellors of profession, teachers, teachers of profession, social teachers, school psychologists, profession consultants) were designed. According to these training programmes the training courses were organized.

2) 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?

National level. In order to increase the investment to research, to create the conditions for the private sector to invest into research, creation of new technologies and studies, the works of creation of integrated science, studies and business centres (valleys) were begun in Lithuania. An integrated science, studies and business centre (valley) – is a potential of science, higher education and business open to science, concentrated in one territory, with common or related infrastructure and purposefully redound to the creation of knowledge society and knowledge economy. After successful implementation of the valley programmes the country should have more concentrated science potential, including preparation of new specialists, more effective science and business cooperation and more active commercialization of research results. In 2008 five initiators of valleys are invited to prepare the projects of the development of valleys.

In the Law of Higher Education as well as in one more strategic document - the 2006-2010 higher education system development plan - there is the provision, according to which the employers as well as other social partners of higher education institutions, take part in the management of higher education institution, i.e. they are the members of the board. The board prepares conclusions about the higher education institution development plan, supplies with the suggestions on studies, research, changes of structure that are necessary for those programmes to achieve, it also evaluates the ways the higher education institution performs its tasks and the way it contributes to the state economic, social and cultural development. In the country's 15 state universities there are 15 management bodies – boards. 14 out of 15 state universities boards have the representatives from the employers. Most frequently the representatives of the employers compose 1/3 of all the members of the board.

The Ministry of Education and Science yearly performing order of the specialists for the higher education institutions consults with the representatives of employers' organizations, therefore the latter have the possibility to directly participate in the

formation of the specialists' demand in the country.

At the **institutional level** the higher education institutions work with the employers a lot. Companies are invited to participate in the Career Days, organized by the higher education institutions. They communicate with students and search available candidates for their teams. The representatives of the companies deliver lectures for the students on various topics, in this way sharing their experience. Higher education institutions make contracts with the employers, according to which the students perform practice at the specific companies. The employers establish scholarships at the higher education institutions and in this way encourage young and perspective students.

3) Can you provide two examples of good practice in your country in relation to any of the themes to be covered by the report?¹

One of the most successful initiatives of organization of the career management services in higher education establishments is the activity of the Career centre, established at Vilnius university in 2004. This centre provides not only diverse professional information and consultation services, but also cares about the training of the student career management competencies. While implementing the project supported from the EU structural funds during 2006-2008 the Career centre together with partners created the model of training of career management competencies for the specific professional career of students and the training methods and means for the career management competencies of students – for the career consultants of the higher education institutions. During implementation of the designed model the courses of self-knowledge, learning, career possibilities and career planning were organized for 32 university and college students as well as the training courses for more than 100 career consultants. Due to the project modern career library was created; also the information system of career management was designed for the career consultants and students.

¹ 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.