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**Ministry of Education and Research**

*Division for Higher Education*

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**Answers to short survey by the Bologna working group on employability**

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*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?*

Graduate unemployment is not a problem, following the current positive economic development. For employers, high quality is the core of a qualification. Higher education institutions themselves also have a responsibility for academic careers. Sweden has recently published the inquiry "Careers for quality" to review the current career structures at higher education institutions (a summary in English is available at:

<http://www.sweden.gov.se/content/1/c6/09/42/84/7c72a356.pdf>).

The National Agency for Higher Education is asked by the government to follow up, on a national level, in what way, at what time after graduation etc graduates enter the labour market. The survey is made for graduates from both the first and second cycle as well as for graduates from the third cycle. The survey made in 2005 shows, for example, that out of those who received their PhD five years earlier, 85% were working. Out of those who had graduated from first or second cycle in 2003/04, 70% were working within 1-1,5 years after graduation. Some professions reach a higher percentage, for example doctors and nurses with specialisation (90%). Other groups are much lower, such as those with a degree in arts. These graduates are often depending on scholarships and other funding during their first years after graduation and do therefore not appear in the statistics used for the survey.

Sweden has some 30 professions that are regulated according to national law (including these regulated by EG directives). For a majority of these, a higher education degree in a specific field is

needed. In addition to these professions, there are professions regulated by international agreements, such as professions in the transport sector.

Sweden has, apart from the regulated professions, a liberal employment market, regulated by partnerships' agreements. The government does not interfere in these processes. However, the government sets targets for higher education institutions regarding the number of graduates that should be met in certain areas. These are engineering, teachers and specific nurses. This is to guarantee a certain number of professionals in these fields according to the needs in society at large. As a basis for the decision on these targets, the National Agency for Higher Education is asked to produce forecasts for future needs (see also above).

The Swedish higher education act states that Swedish higher education institutions shall co-operate with the surrounding community. Most Swedish universities and university colleges have established career guidance and counselling for students. This service can be useful for students both before and during their studies. More and more higher education institutions are also doing follow-ups of their graduates and how graduates enter the labour market. Through a governmental decision, the National Agency for Higher Education also follow up, on a national level, in what way, at what time after graduation etc. graduates enter the labour market.

Trade unions also conduct surveys and produce reports on graduates' employment related to the needs of the labour market.

*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?*

Yes, this is done mainly at the local level. About half of the Swedish higher education institutions have a career guidance service to students. The activities at the career guidance services are usually carried out in close collaboration with, for example, companies, health institutions, municipalities, trade unions and employment agencies.

Programmes exist where employers are part of defining the content of the programme, discussing relevance as well as providing projects and placements etcetera.

Different kinds of programmes with a certain focus, such as the Swedish teacher education programmes, have integrated placement periods.

Within the third cycle, arrangements exist where a PhD student is working on their PhD at 50% and employed at 50%. These PhD students usually receive their entire salary from the company.

In Sweden, there is a system of “adjunct professor”. This is a person with an appropriate academic qualification who is hired part time by a higher education institution but still keeps his/her regular employment within a company or similar. This is usually a very fruitful arrangement for the institution, for the company, for the individual as well as for the 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?*

### **The National Agency for Higher Education**

- Surveys made regularly on how students enter the labour market after graduation (for graduates from all cycles).
- Surveys made regularly on the labour market needs to serve as information to students and higher education institutions as well as a basis for the government regarding instructions to higher education institutions on the need for certain degrees (engineering, teacher education and specialised nurses).
- Conference on teacher education programmes organised annually for higher education institutions, trade unions, employers and relevant organisations.

### **Linköping university**

Linköping university was recently announced by the National Agency for Higher Education as being the best Swedish higher education institution when it comes to the combination of student counselling, career guidance and student health services.

### **Programmes with involvement of employers**

Some examples on programmes where employers are very active together with Swedish universities exist, such as the European programmes UNITECH (for engineering students) where the Swedish institution Chalmers is a member and CEMS (for business students) where the Swedish institution Stockholm School of Economics is a member.

UNITECH: [www.unitech-international.org](http://www.unitech-international.org)

CEMS: [www.cems.org](http://www.cems.org)