

Bologna Follow-up Seminar on Employability Bled (Slovenia), 22-23 October 2004

1. Topic

The concept of Employability and its links to the objectives of the Bologna process

2. Relevant section of the Berlin Communiqué

“Ministers underline the importance of consolidating the progress made, and of improving understanding and acceptance of the new qualifications through reinforcing dialogue within institutions and between institutions and employers.”

3. General description of the topic of the seminar

The objective of employability of graduates has been one of the main cornerstones for the Bologna process. However, the term “employability” itself still seems to be a bit vague and sometimes controversial. The seminar will therefore seek to find an answer to what the concept of employability means. This will be done in close connection to the various objectives of the Bologna Process. The objective, which is mainly concerned, is the degree structure. The seminar will look at how the new qualifications are being accepted at the labour market, directly after graduation as well as on the longer term, and what can be improved in this regard. This includes but is not limited to the first degree. The complementarity of the two types of degrees (more professionally-oriented or more research-oriented) will also be discussed. Another link will be made to the topic of mobility and recognition, especially in regard to the European labour market and possible differences that might exist between employability from a national and from a European or even global perspective. The seminar will also examine what impact the aim of better employability has on the designing and restructuring of curricula.

4. A set of questions to be discussed at the seminar and its working groups

1. *What is employability; what is the difference between employability and employment? What makes a holder of a higher education qualification employable? How s/he could enhance her/his employability in the knowledge society? – Students’, employers’, academic and governmental views on the issue.*

2. *Higher education qualifications should guarantee effective entrance to the labour market as well as access to further (higher degree) studies. They encompass employment as well as academic dimensions. They refer to (very) specialised as well as to general and cross-disciplinary competences. In which way could we promote this complexity and interdependence best? Are the needs of European / national labour markets colliding? – Demonstration of good practices; discussion.*

3. *An important part of higher education qualifications is regulated by public authorities (e.g. health, law, education, etc.). What is the role of governmental bodies (organizations) in promoting new Bachelor / Master degrees and enhancing their employability? – Demonstration of good practices; discussion.*

4. What are *key characteristics and main differences between Bachelor and Master degree in terms of employability*? What problems can cause the parallel existence of old and new degrees at (some) labour markets? Should the issue of *Doctoral degree* be also discussed here (employability of PhD graduates) or not (PhD as primarily an academic degree and not a professional qualification)? – Exchange of views; discussion.

5. In which way is it possible to *avoid (new) Bachelor degrees to become only a stepping stone towards Master degrees*; how is it possible to *make (new) Bachelor degrees attractive for a national, European and global labour market*? How should the process of curricular design at institutions answer the complexity of new degree structure? – Exchange of views; demonstration of good practices; discussion.

6. *Academic and professional dimension* (scientific vs. employment goals etc.) of a higher education qualification seem sometimes to be in a collision. If this is a collision at all, what are its grounds and arguments? What are possible measures to overcome it in a knowledge society? – Exchange of views; discussion.

7. In which way systems of *quality assessment and accreditation* could strengthen employability of graduates? Who should be responsible for quality assessment? Does the *enhanced employability* of graduates constitute an element that can also promote the *attractiveness of the EHEA* in other parts of the world? – Demonstration of good practices; discussion.

8. In which way is (could be) the increased *mobility* in higher education connected to the issue of better *employability*? What are incentives and what are obstacles? What scenarios could be made if regional differences and contexts (unequal conditions, brain drain, etc.) are considered? – Exchange of views; demonstration of good practices; discussion.

9. Which elements of the foreseen enhanced *transparency and compatibility* of higher education qualifications across Europe are in particularly important *in relation to employability*? Should (some of) these elements be integrated into common *European framework of qualifications*? What is their relation to issues of *recognition of qualifications*? Exchange of views; demonstration of good practices; discussion.

5. Moderators and rapporteurs from working groups

The set of questions is expected to help moderators to organize discussions in working groups. Questions 1-3 are closely related to working group I, questions 4-6 to working group II, questions 7-9 to working group III. Moderators and rapporteurs from working groups are *Bastian Baumann (WG I)*, *Dr. Aleksa Bjelis (WG II)*, *Polona Miklavc Valencic (WG III)*. Rapporteurs will prepare short written reports.

6. General Rapporteur

BFUG: “A rapporteur should be appointed for each seminar. The report from the seminar should be sent to the BFUG through its Chair and Secretariat, and it should also be made public through the website for the Bergen Ministerial Conference.”

General rapporteur of the Seminar on Employability: *Martina Vukasovic*

7. Recommendations

BFUG: “In addition to the report, recommendations from the seminar may be sent to the BFUG. Recommendations should not exceed one standard A-4 page.”

On the basis of presentations and discussions of the first day recommendations will be drafted and distributed during the second day plenary session for further discussion and confirmation.