

## Short country survey on employability among BFUG members

### Response by Estonia

- 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?

The graduate employment has not been the problem in Estonia due to the strong economic growth period for the last 8 years. Based on the survey on graduates' employment we can say that out of all graduates during 1999-2005 in average 2% were registered as unemployed one year after their graduation. Later this share of unemployment rapidly decreased close to zero. The last half a year or so has witnessed a change in this trend and it is to be seen what will be the impact on graduates' employment.

Rapid economic development has caused a strong demand for the qualified people and that is the reason why there are very few professions where master level qualification is a minimum entry level (like medical doctors, some law or engineering professions). Regarding the civil service, there are no legal obstacles to hire a candidate with bachelor qualification. For the civil service like for most other areas – an employer decides which person (and with what formal qualifications) is the best to fill the vacancy.

There are career and guidance services in all higher education institutions, however, it is a matter of discussion whether their current capacity is sufficient to serve all the enrolled students.

Regarding the output of this working group – good practice examples about university-business cooperation are most welcomed.

- 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?

There is a dialogue on a national as well as regional and institutional level. I would say that most meaningful discussions happen directly on the grass-roots level: based on programs, practical assignments, and involvement of specialists from industry/business as lectures. On a national level, there is unfortunately too much confrontation between higher and vocational education by the central employers' organisations. It must be admitted that, generally, employers tend to be rather critical about the provision in HEI-s. However, in smaller scale there are good examples of sponsoring of professorship or in R&D area as well.

- 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?<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Suggested themes to be covered in the report are:

- awareness-raising amongst employers of the value of a bachelors qualification and associated learning outcomes;

The good example might be the survey of the graduates what is focusing to all (100%) the graduates and drop-outs in higher education level. The analyses are based on the personalised social tax information from the Estonian Tax and Customs Board, respecting the privacy concerns.

The other example of working cooperation is the involvement of employers in the development of professional standards.

By law employers are also involved in accreditation process and there is a requirement that all academic structures (within HEI-s) need to have program board with the involvement of employers' representative. But it is difficult to make any meaningful generalisations what is the real impact of these bodies.

Heli Aru  
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- 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.