

Latvian answers to the employability survey

1) What are the main challenges for your country in terms of employability? Is graduate unemployment a problem?

Graduate unemployment issue is currently not seen as an issue in Latvia. Unemployment surveys of fresh graduates demonstrate that in fact just around 1.5% of graduates do not find employments within 3 months after graduation.

However, high employment rate of graduates is a result of several factors and therefore can not be associated to quality of higher education alone. There are additional factors reducing the number of unemployed graduates are the following:

- a great proportion of students work in parallel to studies so there are cases where they simply don't have to seek a new employment after graduation, and if seeking new employment after graduation they already have work experience which is highly valued by employers.

- due to the fast economic growth of the country the request for highly educated employees is rapidly growing,

- the labour force as a whole is shrinking – both due to demographic issues and to the fact that in the recent years a number of people have found employment in other EU member states.

Government usually sees as an issue the fact that graduates often find jobs in other fields rather than the one they have studied, especially in those cases where if the study expenses have been covered by the state.

Employers often criticize the higher education sector arguing that the graduates have too little specific practical skills in their narrow field of specialisation but this seems not to be a country-specific feature of Latvia.

Are there restrictions on access to certain jobs?

Apart from the regulated professions where the kind of training required for pursuit of professional is defined, in Latvia there are little restrictions to access jobs. It is for the employer to decide which person and with which level of qualification to choose.

As regards the civil service, for instance, unlike to some other countries in Latvia there is no restriction for bachelor to be employed.

The state-level services deal more with unemployed persons rather than assist and guide graduates in building up their careers. Currently there are several organizations responsible for that. At Ministry of Education and Research, the Department of General Education is responsible for career guidance. Several activities from European Structural funds are foreseen to improve the system of career guidance.

2) Is there a dialogue in your country between higher education institutions and employers?

Yes, there is dialogue. At state level employers' representatives are involved in the Tripartite council for professional education, the Higher Education Council has an employers' representative as a permanent member.

If so, at what level does this take place – national, regional, institutional etc? What sort of issues does it cover?

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?

Good examples are the involvement of the employers in the accreditation process of study programmes and in the procedure of preparation of so called professional standards.

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