

CAREER DEVELOPMENT OFFICES IN UNIVERSITIES – IMPORTANT TOOL FOR ENHANCING THE EMPLOYABILITY OF BOLOGNA GRADUATES ON THE LABOR MARKET

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General context

European labour market: more and more dynamic

- the economic crisis,
- globalisation,
- ageing population,
- reorientation towards a low-carbon emission economy

Highly qualified human resource is needed to face these challenges and the requirements of the future society.

Clear message towards all the occupational sectors: the increasing need for higher competences, acquired during tertiary education.

General context

In Europe about 33% of the population has a university degree, comparing to USA – 40% and Japan – 50%

Unemployment or underemployment represents alarming phenomena: in the third semester of 2009, 5.8% unemployment within the population of 25-39 years old possessing a university degree, which is 1.1% higher then in 2008 (4.7% in 2008)

The higher education represents an additional chance for employment assurance, since the unemployment within the population of 25-39 years old, medium qualified of with no qualification, is of 9.1% and it is rising.

Source: European Commission (2010): PLA on “New Skills for New Jobs: changing skills and competences and dialogue between HEIs and private/public employers”, The Hague, 8-10 March 2010, Overview of National Reports.

Trends

Orientation more and more on a service based economy

- ICT

- “Green” technologies

Increasing importance for: human capital – in a knowledge based society

Flexibility of the human resources – taking into account the dynamism of the present labour market

Internationalization – in the globalization context

Trends

Until 2020: about 20 millions new workplaces will be created in EU;

- $\frac{3}{4}$ of this number will be developed in the service sectors – some of them new, based on the novel industry,
- while sectors as constructions, for example, will loose about 2.9 millions workplaces.

The need for new and higher levels of skills will increase from 25% to 31% until 2020.

More and more jobs are complex and require interdisciplinary knowledge, as well as improved generic competences, i.e. communication skills, problem solving, entrepreneurship, innovation capacity, etc.

Source: European Commission COM (2008): New Skills for New Jobs. Anticipating and matching labour market and skills needs, 868 final.

Trends

“The challenge for Higher Education is to anticipate and develop these competences for the knowledge reality of today and tomorrow”

Identified needs for HEIs

- The shift in the competences related approach and a better correlation of the university study programmes to the labour market;
- The improvement of graduates generic (transversal) competences – so it results from several studies, as a general opinion of the employers;
- The facilitation of students transition towards the labour market, from early university stage – as a result of the more and more defuse border between the study period and the one of integration onto the labour market;

Identified needs for HEIs

- The HEIs adaptation to the university population changes – as a result of ageing and the increasing need for lifelong learning (continuing education);
- The development of tracer studies on graduates – as relevant information for quality assessment of the university educational offer.

Funding challenges:

- public funding expected to continually decrease
- More and more needs for external funding raising

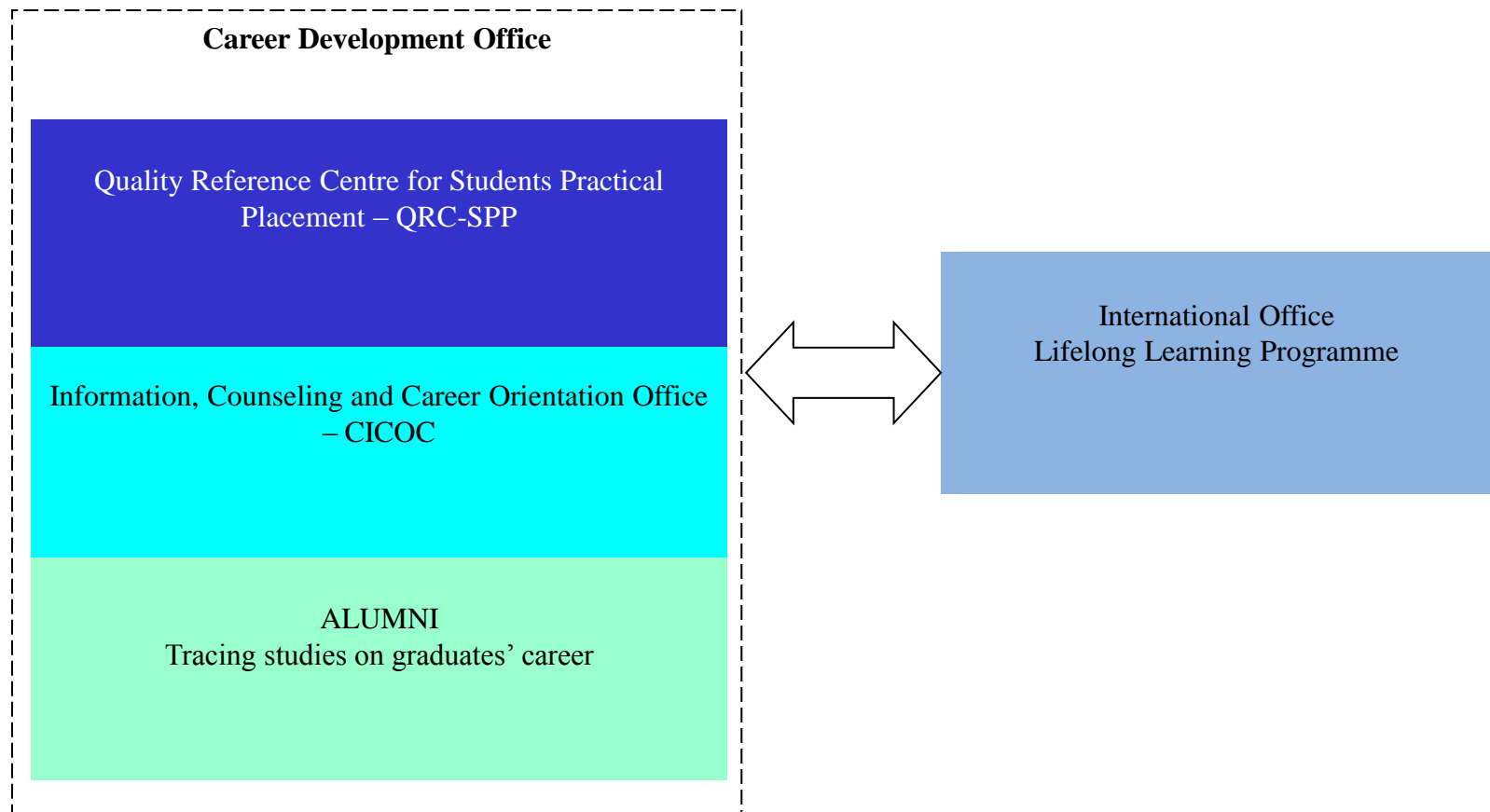
Career development office in HEI

- An instrument for addressing the identified needs: the development of institutional structures in universities responsible for students' career development
- At European level - well developed, covering different type of activities:
 - Interface with the labour market regarding student placement and job offers
 - Career guidance and counselling
 - ALUMNI
 - Etc.
- In Romania – rather recent and not enough developed
 - the national regulation OM 3235/ 2005, according to which: *"Universities set-up centres for counselling and career orientation, to assist students to take appropriate decisions regarding their own training path"*.
 - the career centres role is rather limited, suggesting that the mission is only to advise students on their own professional development.

Career development office in HEI

- Better developed are functions:
 - counselling services (career orientation, self marketing, career opportunities, etc.)
 - services for companies (job fairs, on campus job recruitment, company presentations, etc.)
- Less visible - the activities related to:
 - studies about graduates employability on the labour market,
 - correspondence between the graduated study programme and the job after graduation,
 - opportunity for updating the academic curricula to the labour market needs,
 - tracer studies regarding university graduates, and so on.
- Regarding their role in mediating students' practical placement, although they receive offers for practical places from companies, these offers cover only a limited number of requests and the students continue to claim a more practical oriented education.

Career development office in Transilvania University of Brasov



The **integration** of university structures for developing the Career Development Office

European Network of CDOs

- Need for intensifying and improving of CDOs activity
- One way: participation in the process launched at European level for integration of all CDOs in a European network – for a better exploiting the CDOs achievements by the universities, as successful scheme providing accompaniment to the students in their transition from the class-room to the labour market
- The main questions that the network should offer answers at European level are:
 - How many students will graduate in which qualification in the current year?
 - How many workplaces in which qualifications are currently available at regional/ national/ European levels?
 - What are the gaps and differences between offers and demand?
 - What are the possible paths for improvement and evolution?

European Network of CDOs

- Benefits for all actors involved
 - accurate information for the **candidates entering the University** stage in order to correctly choose their field of studies for the future career, as they will be able to see which is the current situation in Europe or in their country or region: to what extent the qualifications provided by the Universities match the ones really sought by the enterprises.
 - crucial data for **universities** to further elaborate studies on trends and forecasts enabling predictability of the demands at a level never reached before
 - valuable information for the **entrepreneurs** looking to establish a new business or extend the existing one in a new geographic area (for example in another member state) as they will be able to find out immediately about the availability of human resources in that respective area
 - <http://www.careercon.eu>

Conclusions

- Currently there is no methodology or instruments developed at European level in order to make possible continuous systematic analyses and anticipation of future needs of enterprises as input to tailor the University offer in terms of education and training.
- The new context launched by the European Commission in March 2008 – “New skills for new jobs” could not be fully achieved without such scientifically developed instrument.
- A potential response of the universities to the challenges related to employability of graduates as well as to ensuring new skills for the future labour market is to develop institutional structures responsible for students’ career development.

Conclusions

- A model of setting-up a Career Development Office by integrating existing management structures at university level is proposed.
- For a more efficient use of the information the CDOs provide at local/ regional/ national level, it is discussed the opportunity of integrating these structures into a European network of CDOs, with significant impact on all the actors involved in the quality assurance process of higher education – students/ graduates, academics and employers.
- The network is expected to stimulate growth of the CDOs all over Europe as well as creating a federated image of the matters of employment and employability at European level.

THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS

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