

EMPLOY – Enhancing the Employability of Non-Traditional Students in HE

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Poland: Country Context

Poland: Country Context on the Employability of Non-Traditional Students and Graduates

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3.1 POLICY CONCERNING EMPLOYABILITY, NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS IN HE AND THE RELATION BETWEEN THEM

In case of Poland no separate statistics on non- traditional students and graduates are gathered and available as this group is not being officially recognized and subject to special measures and policy frameworks. When it comes to graduates' situation, the biggest influence on their career path was created at national level by two major ministries: Ministry of Science and Higher Education and Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

Reform of Higher Education – 2011-2014

The higher education in Poland is one of the most dynamically developing areas of social life. Within the last twenty years it has undergone sudden quantitative and institutional transformations. Non-state university-level institutions have emerged, and also non-state education forms have been introduced, which has resulted in increasing the number of students by five times. This huge quantitative success, emphasised in many international reports, has not been accompanied by a policy aimed at serious improvement of the qualitative factors till the process of designing and implementing Higher Education System reform.

Poland's approach towards the issue of employability in relation to the HEIs was diagnosed by OECD in 2007 as suffering from multiple problems calling for modernization process at many levels. Among the key- diagnosed issues below were mentioned :

- The central government lacks sufficient tools to steer the system and institutions;
- Programme offerings and curricula are supply-dominated and links with the labour market are weak;
- Tuition fees and the student support framework are not consistent with basic equity requirements;

- The academic profession is unmodernised, with antiquated career and qualification structures;
- There is relatively little involvement in continuing education and training and in “third mission” activities such as external service, training and consultancy.

<http://www.oecd.org/poland/polandmustacceleratereformoftertiaryeducationoecdsays.htm>

Reform of Higher Education in Poland that was implemented in 2011 after three years period of negotiations with social actors and relevant stakeholders. It was focused on challenges such as a lack of pro-quality schemes in the funding system, low level of internationalisation, inappropriate structure of study programmes run at the Polish HEIs, complicated scientific career paths, deficiencies in the management system and weak linkages between HEIs and the labour market. Second stage improvement was introduced in another reform, implemented in 2014.

In relation to the weakness pointed out in OECD diagnose – no links between the programmes and labour market, actions were taken based on the messages of Bologna Process and Bucharest Communiqué. Bologna Process was seen as a part of the solution, because of the strong presence of employability enhancement in the Bologna Process since its inception - to adapt European higher education systems, making them more compatible, modernising degree structures and strengthening their quality assurance mechanisms for European market.

Employability in the Bucharest Communiqué (2012) was in the centre of such priorities as: enhancing graduates’ employability, meaningful implementation of learning outcomes and coherent implementation of structural reform (qualification frameworks, recognition, QA, transparency) and improving cooperation between employers, students and higher education institutions, especially in the development of study programmes that help increase the innovation, entrepreneurial and research potential of graduates. The Bucharest Communiqué regards cooperation between employers and higher education institutions as an important means to enhance the employability of higher education graduates. It was understood and assumed that consulting or involving employers, employers’ organisations and business representatives in developing, delivering and evaluating higher education study programmes is a direct mechanism through which labour market information can be included in higher education. Employers and business representatives do know what skills graduates need when entering the labour market and higher education institutions can use this knowledge when

designing degree programmes. The most important areas in which employers can be involved in higher education, such as curriculum development and participation in higher education institutions' decision-making bodies was taken into account while designing the reform of HEIs in Poland.

Bucharest Communiqué: Making the Most of Our Potential: Consolidating the European Higher Education Area 26-27 April 2012,

When a new law on higher education came into force on the 1st of October 2011, its key – pillars were: programme autonomy, learning outcomes oriented teaching and learning process and linkages between HEIs and the labour market. Increase of programme autonomy and learning outcomes oriented education was built in a relation with better fit to the European market areas due to the connections between National Qualification Framework, based on and comparable to the European one. Central list of study programmes (names and standards) was abolished and new, innovative, interdisciplinary courses were introduced, giving the space to the universities to be more creative, interdisciplinary and market –oriented in curriculum designing. Respective changes in the Quality Assurance process were introduced - an internal QA system focused on learning outcomes of utmost importance.

When it comes to linkages between HEIs and the labour market followed measures were introduced by the reform:

- more diversity as regards profiles: a new “practice-oriented” profile, with stronger ‘market – oriented programme and non- academic specialists in a field as a teacher (so called ‘practitioners’)
- more flexibility regarding the teaching staff: practitioners not only involved (reform of 2011), but also approved to be declared as a ‘key- staff’ while applying for permit to open a new curriculum to the QA national board and ministry (reform of 2014)
- involvement of employers in shaping curricula, in teaching, and in assessing its outcomes
- dual education model (half of the study programme is being delivered in the workplace)
- Higher Schools of Professional Education obligated to create special councils with representatives of the regional authorities and the regional business community
- tracking graduates’ employment outcomes

- Ombudsman for Graduate Affairs
- more focus on student career centres

Another actions were taken in order to improve employability and deregulate labour market in relations to the process of reforming Higher Education. Among the main problems diagnosed here were decreased employment rates as a side-effect of regulating access to professions. It was noted that qualification requirements working often as an access barrier for young people during the transition from education to the labour market: long apprenticeships, examinations, additional costs, post-graduate studies, etc. „Deregulation” process was initiated as a result and in line with the reform of higher education, which was perceived as a strong argument in favour of deregulation (programme autonomy, learning outcomes approach). The role of the Ombudsman for Graduate Affairs in this process was an important one – presenting the perspective of higher education graduates in relation to current state of the affairs in the period of school to work transition at the tertiary education level.

Information About The Proposed Changes In The Higher Education System In Poland

http://www.nauka.gov.pl/g2/oryginal/2013_05/170256ccb0fa76630a26a4930b23d7c7.pdf

Employability Improvement Programmes of Ministry of Labour and Social Policy

Another measures were taken by other ministries as well, specially by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, in order to improve employability of graduates. Programs and initiatives of Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, addressed to young graduates (general cohort of 2014, % of HE graduates unknown), reached the number of 177.000 young unemployed involved in the activities such as: internships (117,2 thousand.), trainings (22,9 thousand), subsidized employment (34,9 thousand).

a) support provided at the level of local employment offices as part of wide initiative for employment enhancement, reducing the effects of unemployment and pro-active labour approach:

- training programmes
- supported employment in public sectors
- internships

- financial incentives for employers creating job opportunities for vulnerable groups and long-term unemployed
- financial incentives for unemployed who wants to start their own business

b) special measures of Labour Division addressed to youth under 30 years old:

- introduction of so called ‘coupon system’ (free of charge governmental guaranteed sets of services and products) allowing young unemployed graduates to improve their skills and their employment opportunities (‘internships coupons, trainings coupons, employment coupons, re-location coupons)
- financial incentives and tax reduction for employers who were hiring a person under 30 years old, getting their first job
- financial incentives and tax reduction for employers who were hiring a person under 30 years old, previously unemployed

c) *Youth Guarantee* Initiative

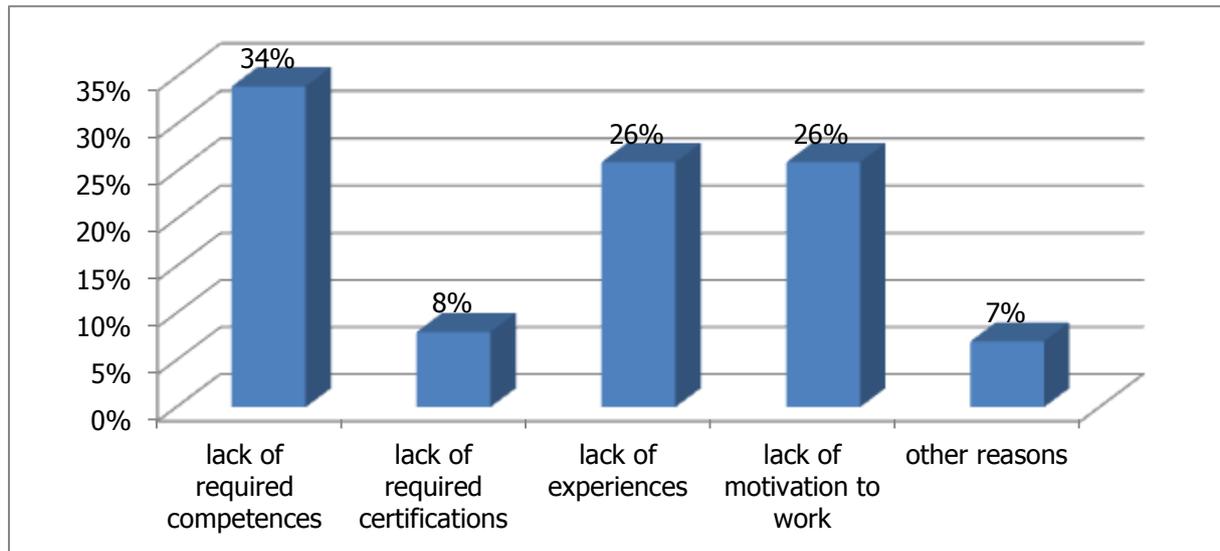
Youth Guarantee Initiative is a framework of actions, services and financial incentives such as:

- public employment service work portal with practical hints on job seeking;
- *My First Business – support for the beginners* programme that provides loans for last year students willing to start their own business as well as graduates up to 4 years after graduations and young unemployed;
- loans for employers creating new jobs;
- training and consulting services for loans applicants.

Ministerstwo Pracy i Polityki Społecznej, Departament Rynku Pracy, Wydział Analiz i Statystyki (2014). Sytuacja na rynku pracy osób młodych w 2014 roku. Retrieved from: <http://www.mpips.gov.pl/analizy-i-raporty/raporty-sprawozdania/rynek-pracy/sytuacja-na-ryнку-pracy-osob-mlodych/rok-2014/>.

Statistical data specify expectations of Polish employers towards graduates. According to the BKL 2010-2012 76% of employers who declared their willingness to hire new employees in 2012 encountered difficulties in finding suitable candidates. Beside deficiency of required competences another problematic issue was lack of proper motivation to work.

Figure 1. Employers assessment of candidates for job (*Bilans Kapitału Ludzkiego 2014*)



3.2 NATIONAL STATISTICS CONCERNING EMPLOYABILITY, NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS IN HE AND THE RELATION BETWEEN THEM

HE graduates up to 27 years old on the market in Poland

In academic year 2013/2014 1. 549,9 thousands of students was studying, while in academic year of 1990/1991 the rate was merely 400 thousand. Enrolment rate was increased from 12,9% to 49,2 %. However, since 2005/2006 when the highest number - 1. 953,8 thousands of students were registered, numbers are going down gradually, due to the demographic changes, mainly in a group of 19-24 years old. In 2002, among all officially registered unemployed only 4 % was with educational attainment of tertiary level, while in 2014 – 12,4%. Graduating from HE therefore does not guarantee the employment, but there are still strong statistics showing that it significantly increases the chances for finding a job. The rate of unemployment among all graduates was still the lowest among HE graduates in last quarter of 2014 – 4.6 % and the highest among the graduates of primary and lower secondary level - 16, 9%.

Based on current report *EHEA 2015 – Bologna Process Implementation*, the skills and competences students gain during higher education can only enable them to find employment, but do not guarantee it. As was also described in the recent Eurydice report on Access, Retention and Employability (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2014a), graduates' employment prospects depend largely on the general state of the economy on the one hand,

and their individual characteristics (such as their age, gender, ethnicity or social class) on the other. This seems to be true when it comes to Polish graduates situation as well.

Polish graduates on the labour market in 2014 in the snapshot:

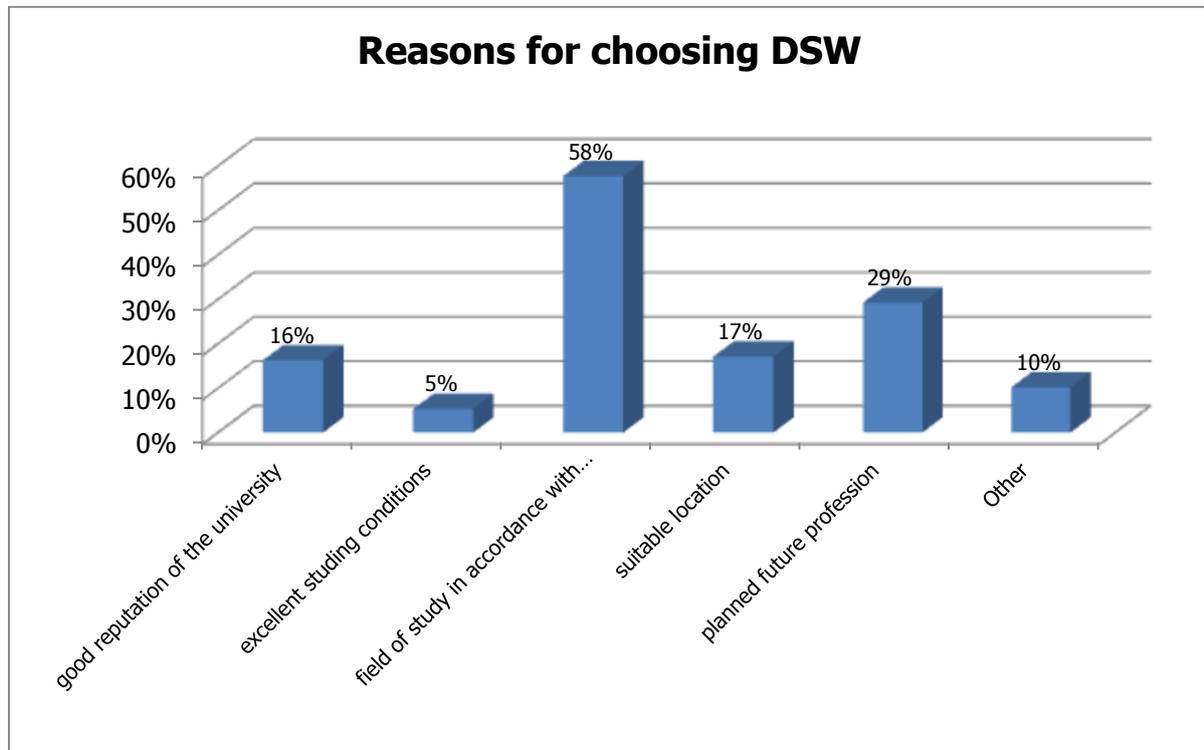
(based on: Report MPiPS, Sytuacja na rynku pracy osób młodych, 2014)

- 438 HEIs and 1.549.900 students;
- 12,4% HE graduates unemployed
- 1,3% of all unemployed in the cohorts are HE graduates under and of 27 years old (23.000)
- Highest unemployment rates among following professions (% of unemployed graduates of 2014 in the brackets) (1) educators/ teachers/ pedagogs (11,6%), public administration specialist (11,4%), economists (6,7%).

An attempt of centralized national scale research and monitoring of HE graduates employability was also introduced as a part of the reform of 2011. National ministry of HE introduced an obligatory demand to monitor graduates' s employability (since 2011-2014) as an obligation of the HEI. In second stage of developing reform, in 2014, this is being abolished and task was taken over by Social Security System agencies, due to wide access to data connected with all forms of employment and unemployment. The reason for this decision was also an urgent need to collect unified set of database for the purpose of national statistics and comparison, which was impossible while every HEI was using their own methods and calculates the rates in a specific way.

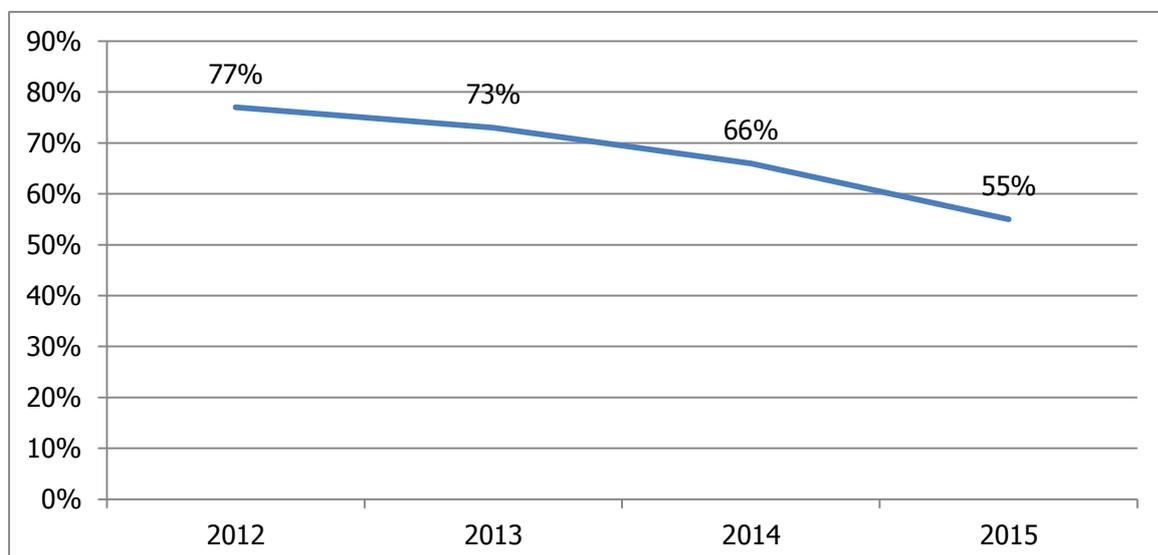
However, second stage reform still recommends for HEI to monitor graduates career pathways for the purpose of improving programmes and quality assurance. Individual measurement and follow up of graduates tracks is also often a subject of internal university's procedures, based on the feedback from the students participating in all kinds of projects involving internships and workplace learning and experiences (in DSW 20 % of students who took part in such projects got instant employment offer). Survey conducted among the DSW bachelor level students indicates three main motivations for enrolling in university: following own interests (58%), future profession (29%), localization (17%)

Figure 2. Reason for choosing DSW (source: DAiP DSW, Plany edukacyjne absolwentów studiów licencjackich DSW 2014)



It's worth mentioning that a clear decline in planning to continue education on a master level may be noticed. In the case of the DSW graduates data is as follow: 77% planned to continue education on a master level in 2012, while in 2015 it was just 55%.

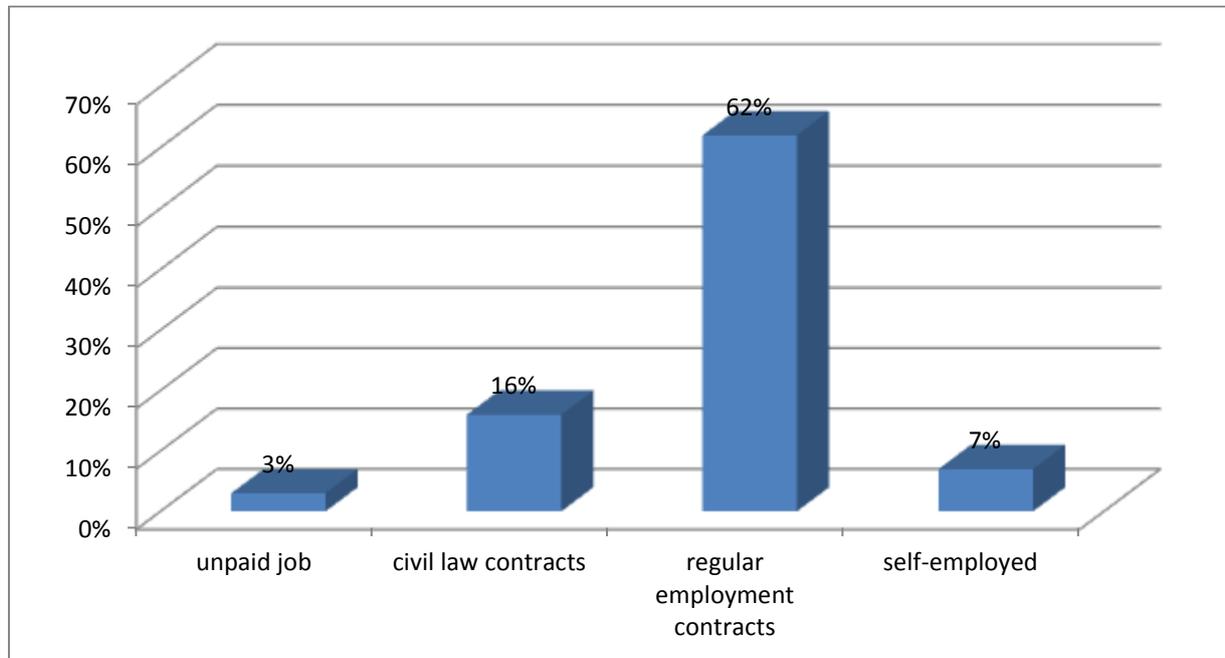
Figure 3. Willingness to continue studies after gaining bachelor degree (źródło: Raport o absolwentach DSW 2015, DAiP DSW 2015)



HE graduates in Poland among their European peers

In Poland regular employment contract is the main type of graduates employment.

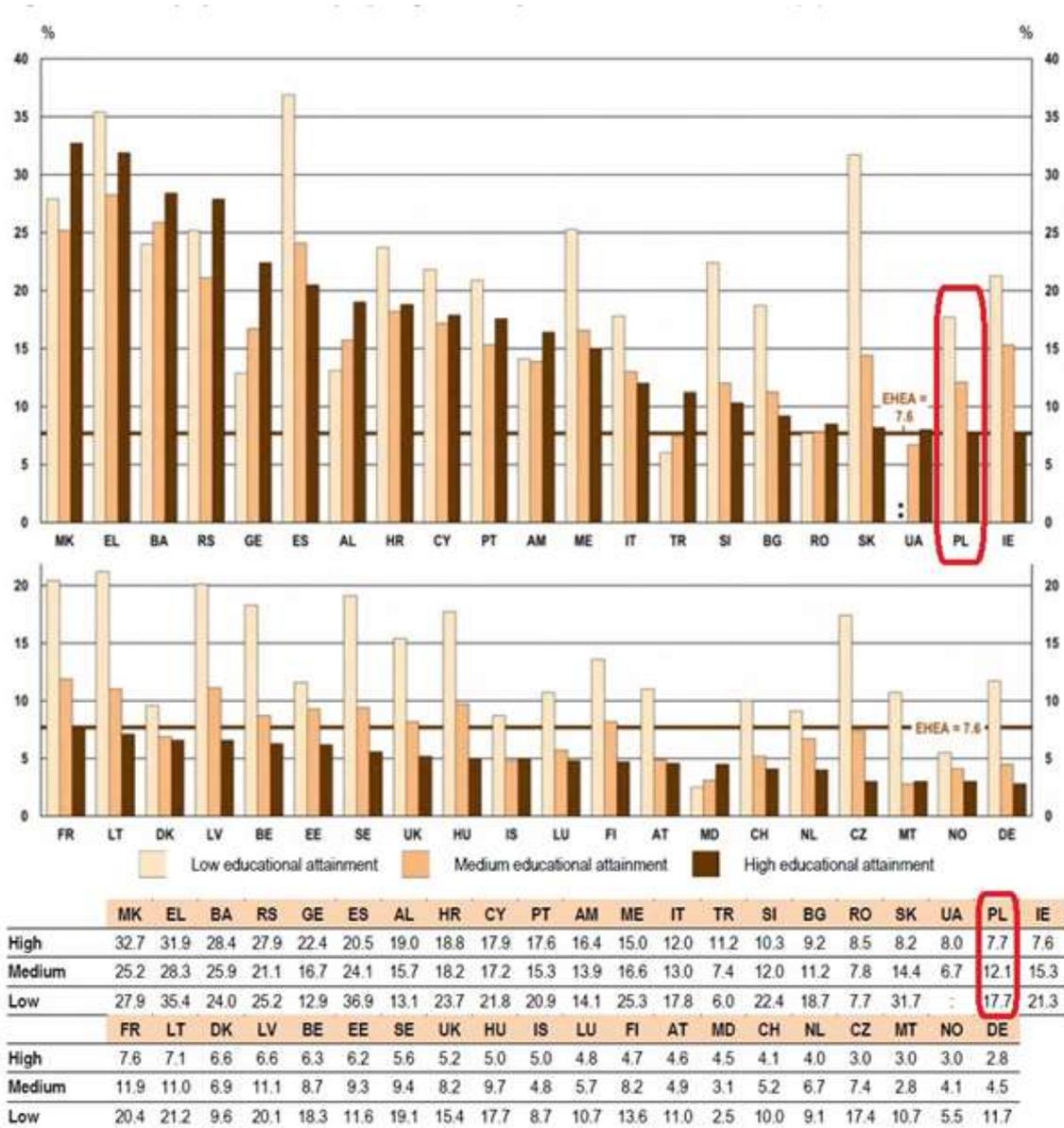
Figure 4. University graduates under 30 years old (source: Bilans Kapitału Ludzkiego 2010 - 2012).



When it comes to unemployment rate, gender rate and qualification mismatch rate, Polish graduates in the labour market among European graduates are in most cases at or a bit above the average for EHEA (European Higher Education Area), however it needs to be mentioned that European average for gender ratio is not in favour of female HE graduates, where there is still a lot to do to support equal opportunities for female at the labour markets.

When it comes to unemployment rate, Polish graduates are situated exactly in the average of EHEA, with the unemployment rate for tertiary level at 7,6%.

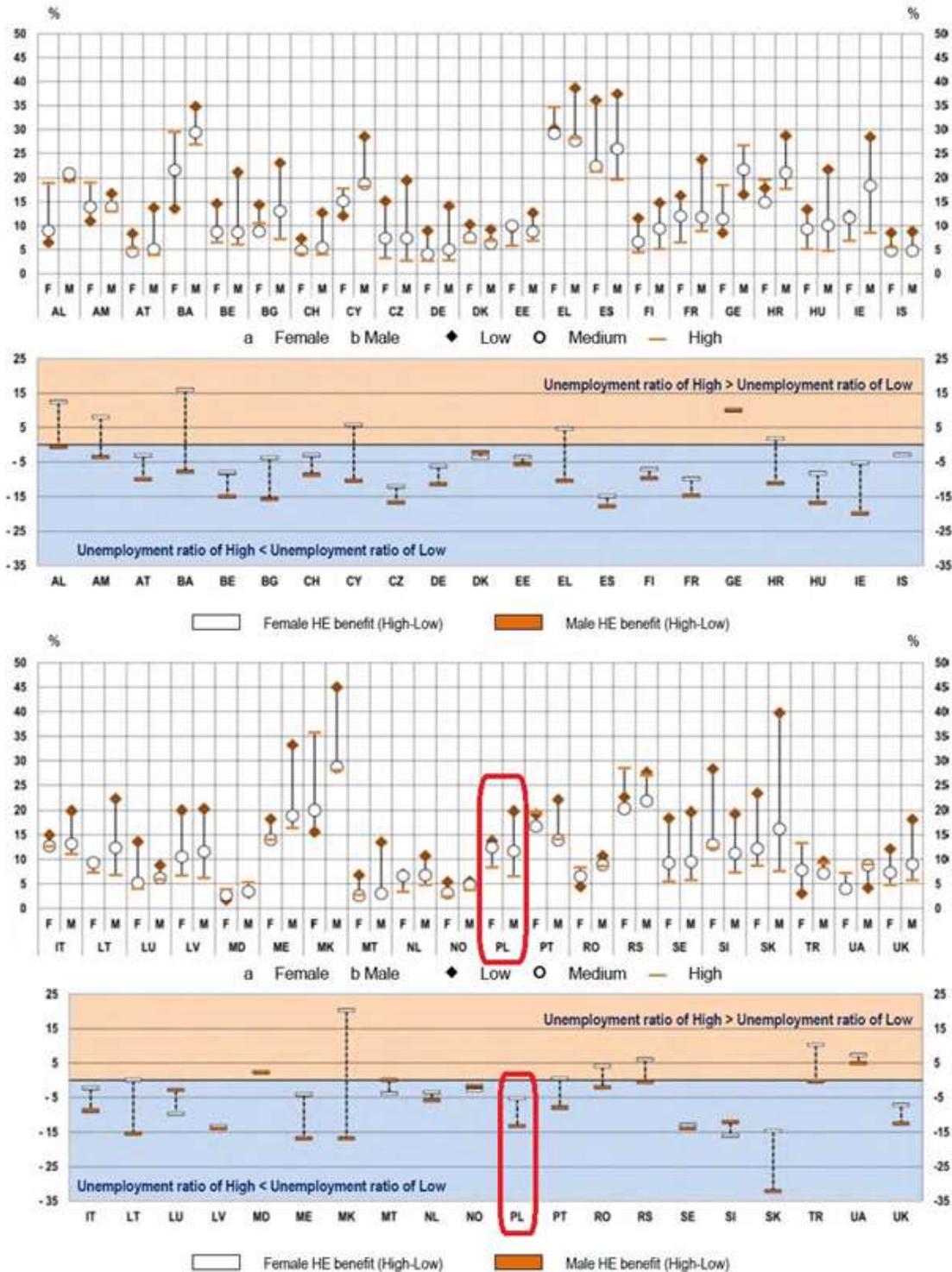
Figure 5. Unemployment ratio of people aged 20-34 by educational attainment level (%), 2013



Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey (LFS) and additional collection for the other EHEA countries. Retrieved from The European Higher Education Area in 2015: Implementation Report, p. 183

In general, obtaining a higher level qualification lowers the probability of becoming unemployed for both women and men. However, the gap between the unemployment ratios of young people with high and low educational attainment is different for women and men. When looking at the EHEA region as a whole for the year 2013, while the unemployment ratios of young women and men were nearly identical among the highly educated.

Figure 6. Unemployment ratio of people aged 20-34 by educational attainment level by sex (%), 2013

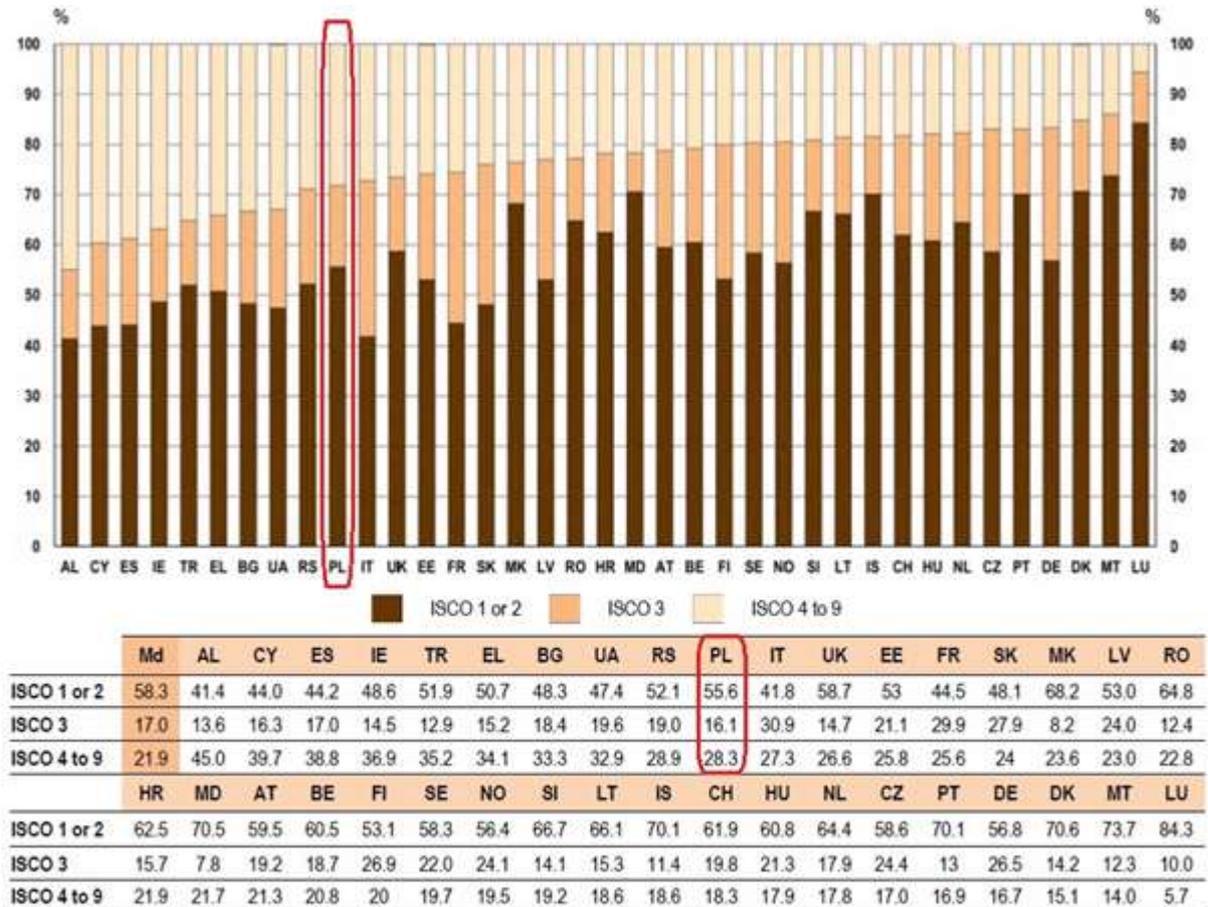


Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey (LFS) and additional collection for the other EHEA countries. Retrieved from The European Higher Education Area in 2015: Implementation Report, p. 186

Looks like in case of Polish graduates, education (still) reduces the gender gap in unemployment. Yet , it is visible that obtaining a higher level qualification seems to improve men's employment prospects more than those of women and this trend is true not only for Poland, but also for majority of countries, except Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova and in general the male unemployment ratio is higher than the female one among the low skilled, but lower for the high skilled.

According to Cedefop, important indicator of the labour market prospects of graduates is vertical mismatch, which occurs when there is a discrepancy between graduates' level of education or skills and the level of education or skills required by their job (Cedefop 2010, p. 13). It suggest diverse forms of inefficiencies in how the education system responds to labour market needs. The relatively high proportion of over-qualified but not over-skilled people suggests that many stay too long in the education system while not receiving extra skills and competences. This can also indicate that tertiary education institutions were not able to provide graduates the skills necessary for a better labour market position. However, social and economic phenomenon, such as a sudden drop in labour market demand, labour market imperfections, discrimination, etc. – are not always in higher education institutions' control. Over-qualification rates for HE graduates in Poland is a bit over European median (21,9 % of graduate employed in ISCO 4-9 groups) and counts 28 %, as seen on figure 6.21 presenting the distribution of people aged 25-34 with tertiary education qualifications and employed in ISCO 1 or 2 (legislators, senior officials, managers and professionals), in ISCO 3 (technicians and associate professionals) and in ISCO 4 to 9. According to International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) occupation level 4 to 9, includes clerks, service workers, agricultural and fishery workers, craft and related trades workers, plant and machine operators or elementary occupations .

Figure 7. Presenting the distribution of people aged 25-34 with tertiary education qualifications and employed in ISCO 1 or 2 (legislators, senior officials, managers and professionals), in ISCO 3 (technicians and associate professionals) and in ISCO 4 to 9.



Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey (LFS) and additional collection for the other EHEA countries. Retrieved from *The European Higher Education Area in 2015: Implementation Report*, p. 193

3.3 NATIONAL RESEARCH CONCERNING EMPLOYABILITY, NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS IN HE AND THE RELATION BETWEEN THEM

Indicators of graduates' successful in- job placement in Poland (Pacuska, 2014):

Employability of university graduates has been the subject of study abroad for many years. In Poland most of the higher education institutions (HEIs) started monitoring graduates only as a result of the statutory requirement in 2011, even though it was usually a subject of study of high interest in most European universities. Maria Pacuska conducted such study based on graduate surveys at Polish universities in order to present various types of indicators

measuring labour market success of graduates, which reflects multidimensionality of the phenomenon of employability. As stated by Pacuska (2014), although the employment rate is a key indicator of graduate employability, it may be enriched with indicators of quality of the workplace (conditions of employment and remuneration). Other useful indicators of labour market success of graduates: the average lengths of job search and links between major and subsequent employment (qualification mismatches). Finally, it is important to study graduate long-term employability. Few years after graduation the measurement of the graduates career path will be more reliable and their self-evaluation - thanks to several years of professional experience - will be more valuable. Key indicators of the study were as followed:

- employment as a general indicator of usefulness of degree: in Poland, depends on HEI, between 8-23 % of graduates is experiencing difficulties in finding employment up till 6 months after the graduation.
- average time of employment searching since graduating: 3,6 months
- working accordingly to qualifications attained: 80 – 90 % of graduates confirms usefulness of their education in current job positions
- salary: salary level for graduates of polytechnic schools and technical sciences is between 3,500 PLN to 4200 PLN, while graduates of social science and humanities reaching at average 2300 – 2500 PLN of monthly salaries (according to National Salary Research by Sedlak and Sedlak *XI Ogólnopolskie Badanie Wynagrodzeń (OBW)* 2013); graduates of HEI with high positions in national rankings are getting more job offers, higher salaries and higher positions.
- graduates' employment in long time perspective: the rate of employment for HEI graduates is higher in long term perspective then right after graduations (for example in 3 years after the graduation 90 % of top ranking universities are on the market).

Study of Human Capital - Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (PARP)

What are the resources of building employability capital among PL students/graduates

(based on: Jelonek, M. , Antosz, P., Balcerzak-Raczyńska, A. 2014)

SHC is a systematic studies conducted by the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (PARP) since 2010, in cooperation with the Jagiellonian University, to trace the changes in the structure of competencies in the labour market. The first round of the study was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2010. The Study of Human Capital in Poland is a complex research project. Every round covers: more than 16,000 employees more than 17,900 people at working age more than 8000 unemployed registered with County Employment Offices (PUPs, 1st round) more than 35,700 last grade students in secondary schools (1st and 4th rounds) Study of Human Capital in Poland – the largest study of the labour market in Poland .The model of the Study of Human Capital in Poland more than 35,000 university students (1st and 4th rounds) more than 20,000 job offers more than 4500 training institutions.

To present a full picture of the situation in the labour market based on the Educational Information System (SIO) and the data of the Polish Central Statistical Office (GUS), the BKL Study analyses also fields of study in upper secondary schools and institutions of higher education. Result of the 2013 round of study regarding graduate was presented in a separate report - **Future human resources of Polish economy. Researching students and analysing study programmes delivered in 2013** by Jelonek, M. , Antosz, P., Balcerzak-Raczyńska, A. Study was a part of 4th round of Human Capital Balance. Education and labour market (4).

Key findings of this study was organized around followed themes:

- position on their own professional future
- job experience while studying
- non-formal education
- internships and practical work place learning
- extracurricular students activities (informal education)
- graduates' self esteem

When it comes to students perception on their professional future on the labour market, the most pessimistic are the students of humanities and social sciences, while the highest hopes and optimism for the future is the feature of students in art, law, IT, medicine, engineering. Despite the pessimism, 75% of students did not engage in any extra training, courses or competence workshops while studying, which were not a part of official programs. Those who were making an extra effort, most likely were choosing foreign language courses – 30% of all cohort. 42% of the students is having a temporary, part – time jobs while studying,

which are not related with their programs and major courses. The reason for that is to cover some of their expenses or support the parents who cannot afford to pay for all the expenses related with being students, especially when it comes to costs of living in bigger cities where majority of HEI is located. 35% of students is engaging in internships and practical work place learning while studying, mostly in the programs related with healthcare, education and social work. This trend is stronger among the students of non- state HEI (10% more than of public HEI). Relatively low level of engagement was noted in extra – curricular social activities and voluntary initiatives (around 20%, where majority of education programs). When it comes to self-esteem and assessment of their own competences, students felt the most confident in computer skills and internet (average grade of 4.25), social skills (4.09) and high availability for the purpose of future employment (4.06).

based on: Jelonek, M. , Antosz, P., Balcerzak-Raczyńska, A. (2014). Przyszłe kadry polskiej gospodarki. Na podstawie badań studentów oraz analizy kierunków kształcenia zrealizowanych w 2013 roku w ramach IV edycji projektu Bilans Kapitału Ludzkiego. Edukacja a rynek pracy(4). Warszawa, Polska Agencja Rozwoju Przedsiębiorczości, Retrieved from: http://bkl.parp.gov.pl/system/files/Downloads/20140523082725/Raport_badanie_studentow_I_VedBKL.pdf?1400826481.

EFD funded *Study of educational and job market in Lower Silesia 2014*

(Badanie rynku edukacji wyższej na Dolnym Śląsku 2014. Projekt finansowany z EFS)

Study of educational and job market in Lower Silesia 2014 was a part of the European project funded by ESF as a part of the strategic axis Human Capital. Main aim of the study was to deliver reliable information about the situation on the job and educational market in the region. Information and knowledge obtained was supposed to be forged into more targeted, effective strategies of employability improvement in region of Lower Silesia as well as to prevent unemployment. Main research problem was to analyse graduates career paths and their socio – economic conditions in relation to the job market. It was also in the focus of the study to analyse educational offer of HEI in the region of Lower Silesia. Study was conducted by the team of prof. J. Kurzępa and *Pretendent Research Corporation*.

Majority of the students (90%) declared that choosing practical, market oriented majors such as economy or polytechnic school is more effective strategy than choosing humanities and social sciences. Some students decide to study more than one programme (20% is taking two majors, 3% - 3 or 4). Primary choice for 78% of the students is public HEI (no fee is being charged for full time students), 22% is enrolling at non- state institutions. The least chosen programs at non- state HEI's are technical programs (8%) and humanities (23%). General perception of the match between educational offer and market demands is quite good among students – 35% see the good match, another 35% - average match, perfect match – 13%, rather a mismatch – 11% and complete mismatch – 6%. 30% of the students was satisfied with their choice of study programme, 21% claim that they would choose differently. Majority has some work experience, sometimes multiple jobs: 36% was having 2,3 jobs, 27% 4,5 jobs, 18% at least one job position. In 24% cases this positions were related with the program of the study, in 28% cases – non related at all. Majority of job experiences was gained while apprenticeship programs (33%) and practical training being part of the curriculum (58%). According to the graduates, main cause for unemployment of young people are: lack of job experience (26%), economic crisis (26%), lack of proper job offers (24%). When it comes to non-formal learning outside the university - extra courses and training programs, language courses were the dominant one (19%), next choice was on certified courses activities, such as driving licence courses (16%). Relatively less interesting for the graduates were soft skill courses (5%) and IT courses (3%). In general 34% of graduates have never engaged in any extra educational activities. 32% of graduates is currently not planning to take a part in further education activities nor is taking a part at the moment, 17% is continuing their study at another major, 15% of graduates is involved in professional, branch specific trainings.

When it comes to graduates in Lower Silesia' strategies of employability, researchers had identified followed:

1. *long march*' strategy: resilience, persistence and patients in aiming for goal achievements in finding right job
2. *'multiplying initial resources'* strategy: long term educational investments and proper preparation for getting the right job by careful planning
3. *'wide back' strategy*: looking for influence and social connections which allow the access to limited resources and knowledge, looking for 'gate keepers'
4. *'fatalist/pessimist'* strategy: accepting the fate and whatever comes with it

5. *'mutual support'* strategy: looking for peer support, building relationships with colleagues from the university, loyalty as a resource

Summary

According to the Polish higher education managers maintaining relationship between universities and employers increases the employment rate of graduates. University degree combined with, highly valued by employers, vocational experience boost chances of a nontraditional graduate at the labour market.

58% of employers in Poland declare that they have plans to hire specialists and managers, which situates Poland in the middle of the European state economies ranking e.g. Czech Republic/Slovakia 63%, Denmark 61%, Norway 58%, Spain 28%, Portugal 31%, Italy 37%, Germany 31% (source: kadry.nf.pl). During a hiring process employers use mostly internal measures (e.g. recommendation). Beside professional skills employers consider self-organization and interpersonal competences as equally important.

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The European Higher Education Area in 2015: Implementation Report

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