

Employability of non-traditional students in HE

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Non-traditional students

- Underrepresented in HE and constrained by structural factors in their participation:
 - ✓ First in their family to enter HE,
 - ✓ From low income families,
 - ✓ From particular minority ethnic groups,
 - ✓ Mature students & students with children
 - ✓ Students with disabilities



Policies for HE

- EU policies and national policies aim equally towards widening access and enhancing employability
- The relation between them does not exist in most countries
- An implicit conclusion can be that HE reduces inequalities and make students equally employable



Two perspectives on employability

Employment-centered

- The ability (of graduates) to gain initial meaningful employment, or to become self-employed, to maintain employment and to be able to move around within the labour market (Eurodice Report, 2014, p 62)

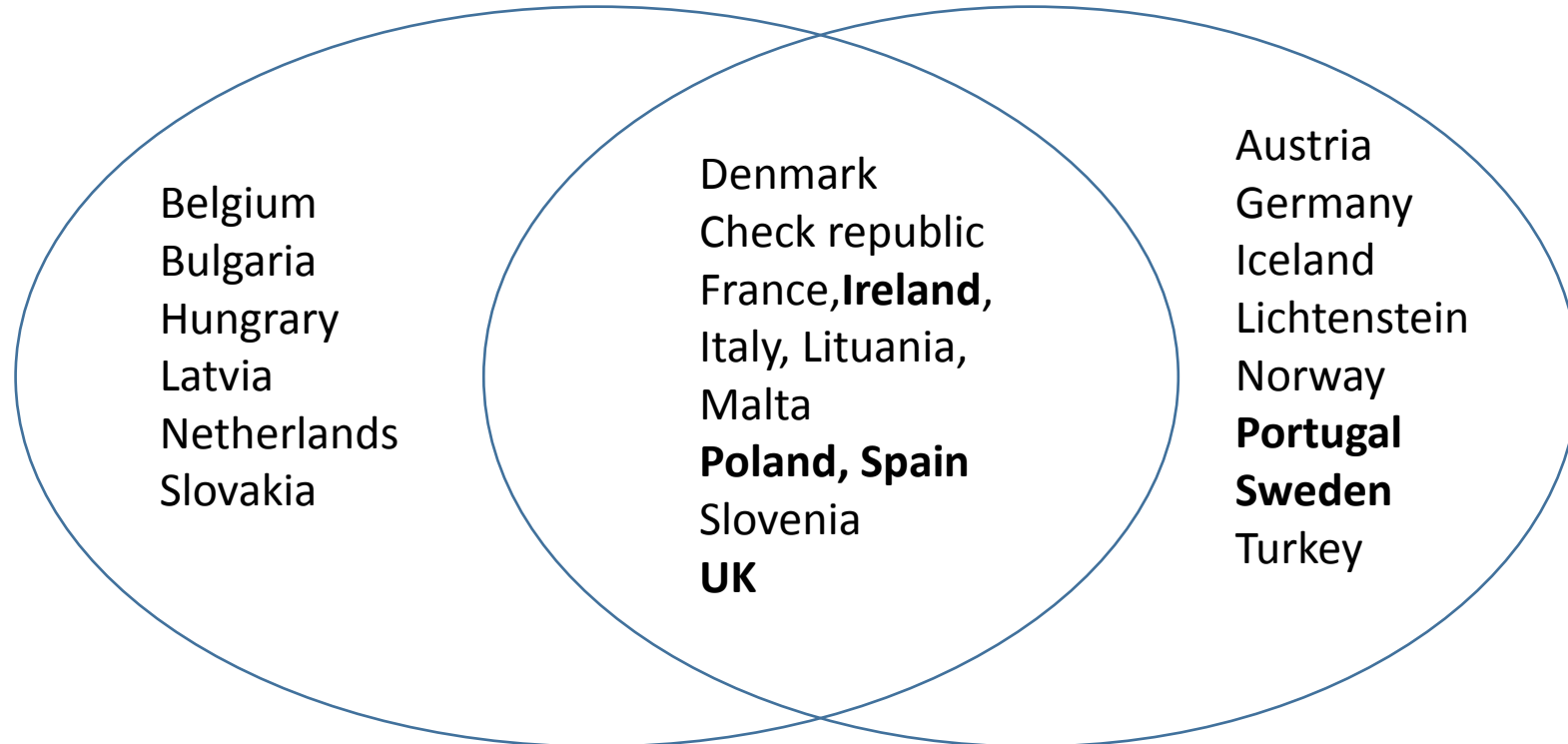
Competence-centered

- A set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations.
- Such skills and competencies are usually understood as needed (and required) by employers. (Yorke, 2006, p 8).



*An employment-centered perspective
Focusing on the needs
of the labour market*

*A comptence-based perspective
Focusing on students' competencies*





The example of migration

- In Ireland: the economic crisis has caused emigration of graduates which is seen as a way of increasing employability as fewer graduates compete for the same employment
- In Sweden: the amount of immigrants with HE degrees from other countries is increasing which is seen as a way of increasing the employability as the educational level in the population increases which makes the population more employable



Higher Education - A solution for everything?

- HE becomes the solution to all financial and social problems in society
- HE as a means for social equality with all graduates starting at the same level.
- There are indications that social inequalities persist, in choices of programmes in relation to age, class, ethnicity and gender



Research on employability

- Mainly based on quantitative approaches, qualitative research is needed
- Policy perspectives, research and statistics concerning employability of non-traditional students are invisible
- Critique towards the individualistic perspective of employability – based on a market discourse
- The focus on employability changes the students' perspectives and attitudes towards their studies



Conclusions

- Despite all national and European policies for employability there are no consensus concerning what it is and how it is measured
- The policies for employability and for widening access to HE are to a larger extent not connected
- HE seems to be a solution for economic growth as well as for social inequality in policy but social inequalities persists
- There is a lack of research concerning non-traditional students' perspectives concerning employability
- An unintended consequence of mass HE in Europe is that more students choose an educational path based on future employment which will have consequences for HE itself as well as society at large
- Who is benefiting from HE?



Thank You!!!!