

PORTUGAL

Start-up Meeting

The start-up meeting at the University of Algarve, Portugal, joined 21 guests for a working breakfast: 3 from the university services; 4 graduates; and 14 employers (8 from the private sector; 4 from the public sector and 2 from the social economy sector). After a short presentation of the EMPLOY project, there was a discussion of some key-themes related to the project in two separate tables. Very briefly it was discussed the concept of employability and the factors that influence it; the relationships between the university and the employers; the expectations that graduates and employers have towards one another; the employability of non-traditional graduates; and what to do to improve employability in the years to come. Some conclusions to be stressed:

- The centrality of internships for graduates to gain experience and learn about the working world; and as a recruitment basis for employers. Yet employers point that after Bologna it seems that internships have been decreasing in the region.
- The relationships between the university and employers cannot be confined to the organizations of internships or the announcements for hiring in the university portal. Although some recent improvements were recognized in this relationship, employers point that some activities are a function of professors' individual efforts or leaderships, which should be better replaced by institutionalised channels of communication and action. In a word, everyone seems to miss good, well-organized and wide functioning careers services.
- A brief discussion on competences seem to reach a common conclusion that although technical competences are of course basic, soft or transversal competences are increasingly appreciated. Employers seem to prefer (despite the fact that the economic area does print diverse positions on the theme) young graduates; or graduates who, independently from age, bring to the enterprise new ideas, innovation and the ability to challenge the natural inertia of institutions; also employers prefer workers who adapt easily both to the culture of the institution. The debate on age was not clear conclusive. On the one hand, the tendency to hire younger graduates seems a fact; on the other hand, there were examples of enterprises who hire older workers (for example, a recent hiring of a 60 year old); and the stress on some behavioural characteristics, as the dedication, interest and willingness to learn, despite of the age. Also culture was debated without a clear conclusion: in some economic sectors recruiting immigrants with success is very common (for instance tourism) but others point culture as an obstacle for people to integrate already existing working teams.