

“Universities and enterprises implementing lifelong strategies in their regions”

“The principal goal of education is to create men who are capable of doing new things, not simply of repeating what other generations have done.

Jean Piaget (1896-1980)

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Introduction

- It is extremely important and a necessity today that Universities and business work together in order to:
 - To review the way universities and education systems function so that their contributions to modernising labour markets are maximized.
 - To enhance cooperation and develop global partnerships between business and universities
- This are key elements in shaping the way in which our societies invest in our future (how we educate our youth and how we optimise the research capacities of universities.)

Future European Labour Market(s)

1/2

- Employment and job creation rates increasing steadily, and unemployment decreasing. However, what these trends do not reveal is that productivity is not increasing at the same rate. In Europe we are **not creating sufficient high productivity jobs**.
- Labour market projections show a significant increase in the future demands for higher skills. To reinforce and leverage our competitive advantages, **we need to increase productivity in technology-intensive production and sectors**.
- To do so: Improving Europe's higher education attainment is essential for our economic prosperity. **Focus specifically on science, technology, engineering and maths disciplines**.

Future European Labour Market(s)

2/2

- **Graduates' employability has to become a key mission for universities** and a main criterion of quality for future degrees, which will empower graduates to work independently in different professional fields.
- The evolution towards process-oriented and interdisciplinary work organization increasingly **requires employees to be adaptable, to develop problem-solving skills and to work in teams.**
- Europe needs to **invest more and more effectively** in human capital if it wants to enhance productivity and innovation. Innovation is not only important in terms of goods and products but also in learning processes.

On Employability Of Graduates

Three key features are of particular importance for the employability of graduates:

- key generic competences which should be applicable in practice to real tasks at the workplace;
- the ability to act independently within a specific professional field (particularly science, engineering and maths disciplines) using basic technical knowledge and skills required by different professional activities;
- the ability, willingness and commitment to develop the skills and competences needed for a specific job and to take responsibility for future employability by reflecting on their individual profile of competence and career development; self-management.

Higher Education In A Global Setting

- Competition in business is the main factor driving excellence. So, the EU needs to inject **more competition in higher education systems**.
- EU countries invest on average 1.2% of GDP into higher education compared to 2.6% in the US. As a result, only one quarter of Europe's working age population has achieved tertiary level education compared to 38% in the US or 36% in Japan.
- Europe is also faced with the **problem of brain drain**. Today, there are about 400,000 Europeans with scientific and technical education living in America. Nearly 10% of the 1.5 million people with a PhD in the US are EU students who moved across the Atlantic.
- In the 'Shanghai Ranking' tables, just 2 of the world's top 20 universities are in the EU. Outside the UK, none figure in the top 40. This tells its own story!

The Importance of Lifelong Learning

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- Overall, in Europe, we can say that the potential untapped benefits of cooperation between enterprises and universities are enormous – and this is an area where we must exploit the possibilities that exist
 - for the performance of educational institutions;
 - for the individuals, the students, the future business leaders of Europe;
 - and for the well-being of companies
- Cooperation between enterprises and all levels of education and training, not only in higher education but also vocational training and schools, needs to be intensified.
- We are in the process of redefining educational attainments in terms of **Learning Outcomes** – which is a competence-led understanding of what an individual is able to do – how the accumulated knowledge, skills can be applied in a workplace context.

The Importance of Lifelong Learning

2/2

- Those who come out of the education system go and work in companies – and they need to be ready for the transition. This approach is crucial for improving the functioning of labour markets.
- **Reinforcing the competitiveness of individuals** is crucial, **not only through theoretical but also practical education**. Companies can help with this.
- **Lifelong learning built around the employability of individuals should be the foundation for future cooperation.**

“Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever.”

(Gandhi)

How can co-operation help?

1/2

- **Dialogue** between higher education institutions and business about the relevant labour market related competences and qualifications **must be intensified**, considering local circumstances.
- Cooperation with business needs to reflect in the **differentiation of study course profiles**.
- Public and private **investment in R&D has to increase**.
- Establishing **customer-oriented career service centers**. They also establish a continuous **link between universities, students, graduates seeking work and potential employers**.
- **Employers can support employees** by putting in place favourable conditions for lifelong learning and competence development, offering internships to students, and regularly **providing universities with information on their competence needs**.

How can co-operation help?

2/2

- Higher education institutions will have **to adapt their offers to different kinds of students**: young people, mature students and employees undertaking studies while working.
- Courses should **provide students with essential generic cross-disciplinary competences** - in addition to specialist knowledge. (proficiency in foreign languages, analytical skills, presentation skills, teamwork, the ability to reflect on one's career prospects, etc.)
- **Enhance transition between educational pathways**, mainly by opening access to those who hold a vocational qualification.
- The **international orientation of courses** is indispensable. (foreign language segments, the widest possible integration of foreign teachers and a high number of foreign students)
- **Student mobility** should be regarded as an integral part of study, and **teacher mobility** as a regular part of professional development.

Conclusion

- Traditional role of Universities: Generating and transferring knowledge
- Challenge for Universities: **More closely oriented to the reality of labour markets**. If they do not institute **employability as a key goal**, universities and other education institutions will not be able to give students the best knowledge, skills and competences for their professional career.
- Increasing **cooperation** between the world of work and higher education, and **acknowledging the shared responsibility of all actors**, are necessary steps to ensure that individuals can continually refresh their skills and competences in a lifelong learning perspective, to improve both their personal and professional competences.
- Individuals must take responsibility for their own career development seriously.
- Business, for its part, is prepared to play its role by improving its cooperation with the higher education world.

Thank you for your attention!

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