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Developing Student Work Experience Programmes within the EHEA Framework: The Role of Social Partners

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Support for the social dimension in the EHEA (1)

- ▶ Recognised the importance of education and educational co-operation in the development of stable, peaceful and democratic societies. "*Bologna Declaration*" (1999)
- ▶ Introduction of Life-long learning in the debate for EHEA and the establishment of a competitive knowledge-based society and economy "*Prague Communiqué*" (2001)
- ▶ Emphasis on the social dimension of the Bologna Process - Improvement of the social characteristics of the EHEA - Recognition of students` associations as full partners in higher education governance "*Berlin Communiqué*" (2003)

Support for social dimension in the EHEA (2)

- ▶ Emphasis on social cohesion, reducing of inequalities and raising the level of knowledge, skills and competencies in society - Personal development and contribution to a sustainable and democratic knowledge-based society "*London Communiqué*" (2007)
- ▶ Strong partnerships between public authorities, higher education institutions, students, employers and employees for the enhancement of LLL "*Louvain Communiqué*" (2009)
- ▶ Work to enhance employability, LLL And entrepreneurial skills through improved cooperation with employers, especially in the development of educational programmes "*Bucharest Communiqué*" (2012)
- ▶ Combination of academic and work-based learning - improvement of synergies between education, research and innovation "*Paris Communiqué*" (2018)

Council of the European Union

"Quality Framework for Traineeships" (2014)

- Inspired by the European Youth Forum Quality Charter.
- Underlines the need for cooperation between education providers and social partners, mainly employers, in order to ensure good quality traineeships and requirements about:
 - ▶ Organization of traineeships
 - ▶ Selection of trainees
 - ▶ Working conditions
 - ▶ Remuneration for trainees by employers
 - ▶ Content of traineeships (work duties)
 - ▶ Evaluation process for trainees and employers
 - ▶ Interaction and communication between employers' and supervising professors

Potential roles for employers in Universities work experience programmes (Direct and indirect impact on Work Experience Programmes)

Direct Impact	Indirect Impact
Offering work experience programs - cooperation in Work Based Learning (WBL).	Involvement in HE planning and management: curriculum development - content and quality delivery on-campus or online of courses.
Participation in seminars/workshops about skill demand, job search, recruitment processes, entrepreneurship, etc.	Consulting HE on new study programs or on promotion of reforms.
	Participation in HE institutions' decision-making bodies and governance.
	Funding, guidance and networking for student or graduate start-ups.
	Involvement in quality assurance governance bodies and external review teams.
	Collaboration in research projects, skills forecasting and dissemination of NQFs.

The role of social partners on social cohesion and cognitive development (1)

- ▶ Improvement of knowledge of the working environment for students, redefining their learning strategy (D'Abate et al. 2012)
- ▶ Work experience programs facilitate the development of multilevel communication and creative collaboration between these groups on issues related to the design of academic curricula, the coping with skill mismatch, the development and dissemination of know-how, elements that allow their functional upgrading and flexible adaptation to the internationally occurring changes (Thiel & Hartley, 1997)
- ▶ Universities contribute to territorial development (Huggins and Johnston, 2009) thus cooperation with stakeholders is essential. Shift of focus from marketisation and privatisation strategies (Middleton, 2000) to valorisation strategies leading to social development and social cohesion (Knowledge-based societies)

The role of social partners on social cohesion and cognitive development (2)

- ▶ The generation and implementation of new ideas about how people should organize interpersonal activities, or social interactions, to meet one or more common goals [...] At one end of this continuum, the development of new ideas about social organization, or social relationships, might involve the creation of new kinds of social institutions, the formation of new ideas about government, or the development of new social movements (Mumford, 2002)
- ▶ Student`s vertical (cognitive) development (Beach & Yvas, 1998) through interaction with the social partners for the duration of the work-experience programme.
- ▶ ‘Globalisation’ is generating the need for new learning relationships between education and work which will support lifelong learning (European Commission, 1995)
- ▶ Young people in full-time education and training to develop their understanding about changes in the ‘world of work’, to enhance their key skills and to make closer links between their formal programmes of study and the world of work (Green et al., 1999) - Hard and Soft Skills

Concluding remarks and additional suggestions

- ▶ Social partners → networking between universities, students, employers` and employees` associations fostering cooperation in various fields (such as curricula, research, graduates` recruitment, scholarships for employee training), evaluation criteria for participating employers.
- ▶ Students associations collaborating with social partners → supportive services for their members (i.e. preparation for recruitment documentation and processes, information about employers, networking opportunities, guidance and mentoring services, etc.).
- ▶ Incentives for employers → “training the mentors” schemes (for employers and employees), management support, participation in job fairs, networking opportunities or research projects, scholarships for employee training, tax/loan provisions.
- ▶ Interactive partnerships: universities - social partners - national authorities.
- ▶ Students` cognitive development better prepared for the changing world of work.

Thank you for your attention!