



Analysis of Employment Rates of Graduates From Romania and European Union

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The employment rate of graduates has become a desideratum for contemporary universities. In response to employers' demand, universities have adopted a number of competency-based curricular changes that, when translated into curricula, are expected to increase graduates' employability. In the current conditions, in the context of employability, universities supports new requirements: the need for efficient training in order to prepare competitive specialists on the labor market, flexible in employment in fields related to qualification, able to work efficiently. The purpose of this article consists in the theoretical analysis of employments rate of recent graduates, also carrying out a comparative study of the dynamics of employments in the European Union.

Keywords: employment, graduates, universities

JEL Code: I2 Education - I23 Higher Education; Research Institutions

1. Introduction

Perceived more and more as the center of economic development, contemporary university education has had to undergo changes that have contributed, on the one hand, to its articulation to the evolution and needs of society and, on the other hand, to its development beyond national borders. One of these changes is represented by the employability of graduates, a key concept that focuses on the situation of graduates but also the need the development of learning experiences that facilitate the insertion of future employees, as well as the circular migration that includes the integration, in a different labor market than the one in which they were trained, of specialists. Both the articulation of higher education with the reality of the labor market and the development of new learning experiences imply the existence of a close collaboration between decision makers. In fact, a study in which 1344 executives from around the world were interviewed highlighted the fact that 41% among them (n = 551) considers this creation of "a well-trained workforce should be one of the top three priorities of any government" [7].

The term "employability" has several interpretations. It generally reflects the relevance of the study program for the labor market. Employability is one of the lines of action of the Bologna Process and is defined as the ability of a person to obtain a job in accordance with his skills, to maintain it, to develop a person's professional entrepreneurial capacity and the possibility of these to change jobs [1].

The global interconnection of labor markets and the transnational mobility of graduates looking for a (better) job have raised the issue of the academic and professional

recognition of diplomas and qualifications offered by higher education institutions located in different countries. Romania was among the first five countries to ratify and implement the 1997 Lisbon Convention on the Academic Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education, which is the main legal instrument for the academic recognition and professional recognition of qualifications in the unregulated area of the labor market from the EU. As part of its international commitments, Romania has taken the initiative to develop a national qualifications framework. This framework is a first step towards a more transparent description of the links between various educational specializations and specific professional fields. In September 2011, the National Qualifications Authority completed the verification of the compatibility of the national qualifications framework with the European Qualifications Framework [2].

National systems and higher education institutions are working hard to increase the employment opportunities of their graduates. Institutions can act to this end, either by configuring their study programs to meet the needs of the labor market, or by ensuring that, through their study programs, students acquire the necessary skills so that, immediately after graduation, they succeed in employment. One of the mechanisms used by decision-makers to adapt curricula to the needs of the labor market is to consult employers and business people for this purpose and their direct involvement. Currently, 17 of the education systems use this method and involve employers in curriculum development, in the education and decision-making process or in advisory commissions [3].

2. Conceptual aspects regarding employment of graduates

From a conceptual point of view, two approaches to the notion of employability can be delimited: the job-based approach, viewed from the perspective of labor market demand, and the skills-based approach, viewed from the perspective of the educational system supply.

The job-based approach presupposes the graduate's ability to find a relevant job and to exercise a professional activity that would satisfy the employer's requirements. At the same time, the graduate can exercise a professional, independent activity or can be looking for a more advantageous job.

The competency-based approach conceives employment as a set of competencies and personal attributes of graduates, which gives them better chances of finding a job [4].

In another approach, a distinction is made between institutional employability and individual employability based on the criterion of responsibility. Thus, employability as an institutional responsibility is highlighted when the classification of universities is determined according to the employment rate of graduates. Thus, the development of employability is systematically pursued and is explicitly included and integrated in the study programs [5]. Therefore, employability greatly influences the image of a university and involves the training of flexible, creative graduates eager to long life learning [6].

Individual employability is the "individual's inclination to find a job" and is analyzed according to five characteristics:

- type of job (job versus job for graduates of tertiary studies);
- synchronization of employment (employment at a certain period after graduation versus employment, regardless of when, only not requiring training, professional retraining);
- proven characteristics at employment (the graduate has all the competencies required by the respective position versus the graduate has the ability to quickly learn and develop the required skills of that position);

- future learning (obtaining a diploma does not represent the end of learning versus the diploma certifies the acquisition of knowledge and skills);
- the skills and competencies that determine the level of employability of a graduate (basic skills and competencies can be used in any institution versus skills and competencies specific to a particular sector of activity, a certain organization).

The level of insertion and employability of graduates depends on their work skills, but also on the knowledge and skills acquired, whether we are talking about soft or hard skills. Soft skills include: teamwork, communication skills, flexibility, patience, motivation, persuasion, time management, etc. Hard skills are specific to the field studied. If the usefulness of developing hard skills is undeniable, studies indicate that ensuring the development of software skills in university activities is very important, if we want the future employee to have "the opportunity to develop that combination of knowledge, skills, abilities and skills needed to succeed in the labor market" [7].

3. Analysis of employment rates of recent graduates

Regardless of the perspective or approach taken, the European state usually mentions employment concerns from the perspective of higher education institutions or student enrollment as a whole. This aspect of employability is an important issue on the agenda of educational policies.

In table 1 are presented information available for employment rates of recent graduates, in 2019. It is based on graduates (aged 20–34) who had completed their education or training between one and three years prior to the survey being conducted. In 2019, the EU employment rate for this subpopulation was 80.9 %, ranging from highs of 91.9 % in the Netherlands, 92.7 % in Germany and 93.1 % in Malta to lows of 59.4 % in Greece and 58.7 % in Italy; a low rate was also recorded in Turkey (57.8 %) and North Macedonia (57.2 %). Aside from the Netherlands, Germany and Malta, there were 14 additional EU Member States where the employment rate of recent graduates was above the 82.0 % benchmark target set by the ET (Education and training) 2020: Luxembourg, Austria, Sweden, Czechia, Slovenia, Hungary, Denmark, Ireland, Finland, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia, Belgium and Estonia [8]. In Romania, rates of recent graduates was 76,1 %, under European Union average.

Tabel 1. Employment rates of recent graduates (aged 20–34) in 2019 (%)

Countries	Total	Sex	
		Men	Women
EU	80,9	83,2	78,6
Belgium	83,5	83,1	84,0
Bulgaria	80,7	85,8	76,3
Czechia	87,3	95,3	79,5
Denmark	85,1	87,8	82,4
Germany	92,7	94,4	90,9
Estonia	83,3	90,2	76,2
Ireland	84,5	86,6	82,5
Greece	59,4	58,9	59,8
Spain	73,0	74,0	72,2
France	75,7	77,2	74,4
Croatia	75,8	75,5	75,9
Italy	58,7	61,7	55,8
Cyprus	81,7	85,3	79,1

Countries	Total	Sex	
		Men	Women
Latvia	84,1	81,2	87,1
Lithuania	80,1	80,1	80,1
Luxembourg	89,4	89,7	89,1
Hungary	85,6	89,8	81,1
Malta	93,1	92,8	93,5
Netherlands	91,9	92,0	91,8
Austria	89,0	90,5	87,4
Poland	84,0	87,5	80,9
Portugal	80,3	81,5	79,2
Romania	76,1	80,6	71,5
Slovenia	86,0	88,8	82,5
Slovakia	83,9	91,2	76,9
Finland	84,4	85,8	83,0
Sweden	88,7	89,6	87,7
United Kingdom	85,4	85,3	85,5

Source: Eurostat (edat lfse 24) and (edat lfse 32)

A comparison between 2008 and 2019 for employment rates of recent graduates is shown in Figure 1. There was almost no change in the EU employment rate over this period (81.8 % in 2008 compared with 80.9 % in 2019).

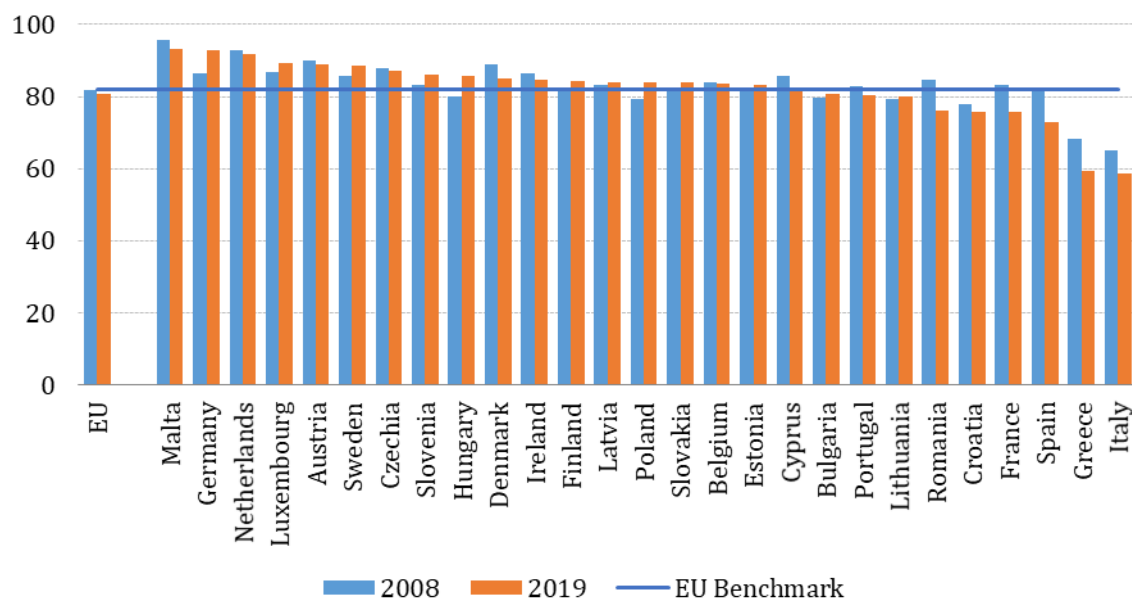


Figure 1. Employment rates of recent graduates (aged 20–34) in 2008 and 2019 (%)

Source: Eurostat (edat lfse 24)

In almost all EU countries, employment rates of recent graduates peaked around 2007/2008, followed by often severe declines in the subsequent years. For the period 2008-2019, lowest employment rates reported by Member States fell between 2009 and 2015, with 16 countries reporting their lowest rate between 2012 and 2014. Compared to 2008, access to the labour market for graduates is still particularly low in Spain, Greece and Romania, where

the employment rate of recent graduates in 2019 was 9.1, 8.9 and 8.7 percentage points respectively below their 2008 levels. Comparatively low rates are also reported by France and Italy where employment rates of recent graduates were around 7.0 points below their 2008 levels. It is interesting to note that back in 2008, Spain, Romania and France each recorded employment rates for recent graduates that were above the 82.0 % ET 2020 benchmark target.

Of the 17 EU Member States that recorded employment rates for recent graduates in 2019 that were above the 82.0 % benchmark target, Poland, Hungary and Germany registered the most sizeable increases between 2008 and 2019, with gains of 4.7 percentage points, 5.4 and 6.2 points respectively. By contrast, although the latest employment rates for recent graduates in Belgium, Czechia, the Netherlands, Austria, Ireland, Malta and Denmark remained above the 82.0 % target, each of these recorded lower rates in 2019 than in 2008.

In 2019, the EU employment rate of recent male graduates stood at 83.2 %, reaching the EU2020 benchmark already in 2018. The rate for recent male graduates was higher than the rate recorded among recent female graduates (78.6 %); this continued a pattern that was apparent over the latest 11-year period for which data are available, as shown in Figure 3 [8].

The largest gender gap for EU employment rates of recent graduates was recorded in 2008. However, with the onset of the financial and economic crisis, there was a rapid reduction in the gap between male and female rates. In 2009, the employment rate of recent male graduates fell by 5.0 percentage points, compared with a reduction of 2.7 percentage points among recent female graduates. This was short-lived as the gender gap widened again in 2010 and remained within the range of 3.6–4.9 percentage points (in favour of young male graduates) during the period 2010 to 2019.

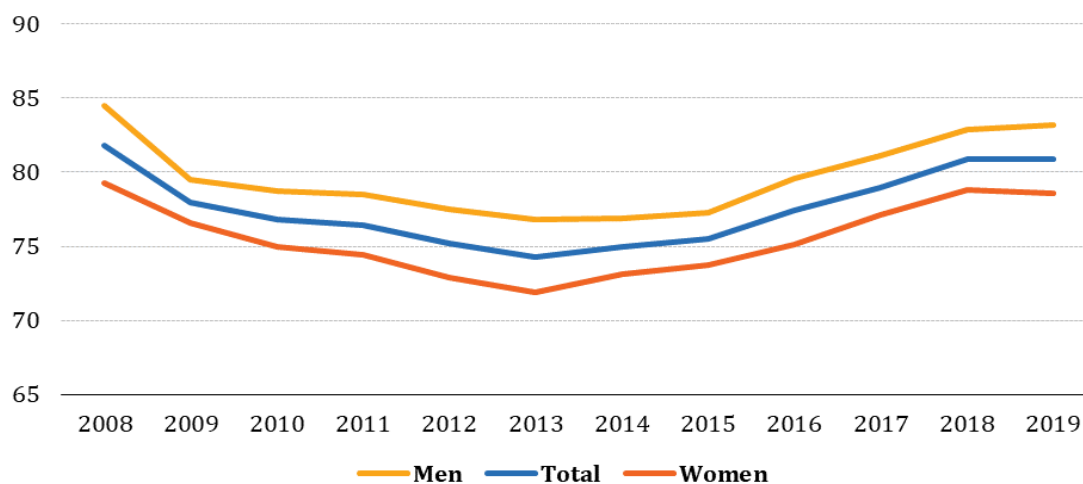


Figure 2. Employment rates of recent graduates (aged 20–34), by sex, EU, during 2008–2019
Source: Eurostat (edat lfse 24)

4. Conclusions

Investment in education is necessary because the economic and social development, the development of education appear as requirements of the overall progress of the society. In the long run, education contributes to the economic development of a country, stimulates progress and raises the standard of living of the population. However, quality education involves a lot of money invested in people, research programs, technology, educational units.

Practice shows that, at the end of their studies, graduates are put in front of employers who need immediate results from them. Career counseling helps the individual to find a



compatible occupation and throughout his career to learn to continuously develop his skills and to capitalize on them during the changes that can take place in his professional trajectory. The role of counseling and career guidance is to develop knowledge and the skills needed for efficient career management. The current economic context has led to an extremely flexible and unpredictable labor market. This has widened the gap between supply and demand.

Higher education institutions must be increasingly connected to the social environment and maintain permanent contact with various communities and organizations, which expect clearly formulated services, materialized in graduates with a high degree of specialization. As higher education develops, so do the standards that society imposes. The development of the society is directly proportional to the level and performances obtained through higher education.

Therefore, it is necessary to increase the interest and the degree of involvement in education and of the institutions outside the university environment.

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