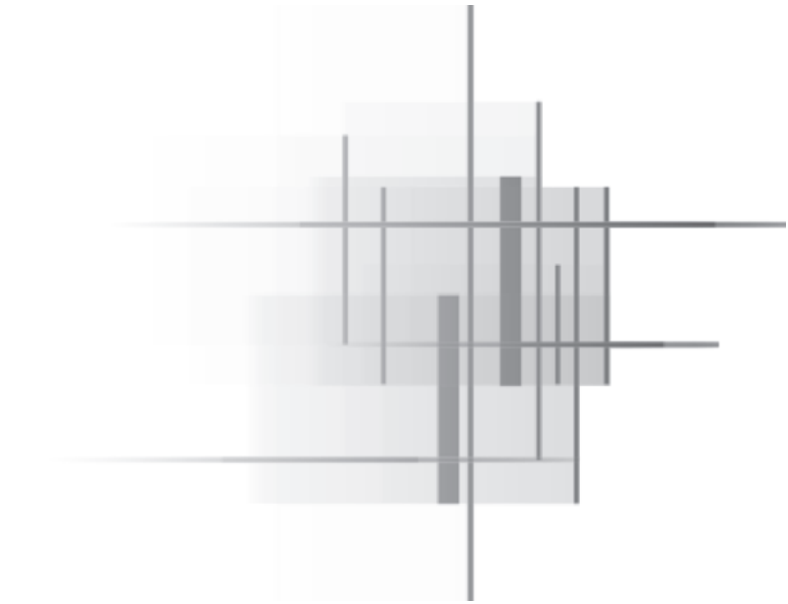
REGIONAL TUNING
– TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

CENTRE FOR EDUCATION POLICY

ALTERNATIVE ACADEMIC EDUCATIONAL NETWORK



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Jelena Kleut

Regional Tuning – towards the European Higher Education Area

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

In the year 2000, when the countries of the region have not yet joined the Bologna process, a group of European Union universities has had initiated the project "Tuning Educational Structures in Europe". With an idea that governments hold responsibility of educational systems, and that the responsibility of educational structures and contents falls on higher education institutions, the participants have created a project to answer the challenges of Bologna process. During the two project phases, until 2004, a *Tuning* methodology has been developed and the number of participants reached 137 universities from 27 countries. Because of its fast spread on the European university map and because of general acceptance of the methodology, even among non-participating institutions, the project "Tuning Educational Structures in Europe" has grown into an academic initiative - the one that attracts more and more higher education institutions.

Only a couple of years ago, countries in the region, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia and Serbia, have started developing new, reformed curricula, in the spirit of the Bologna process. Only few universities from this region have joined the European initiative, while the ones who knew the *Tuning* methodology and applied it are rare. For these reasons, the Centre for Education Policy of Alternative Academic Educational Network (CEP AAEN) has initiated the project "Regional Tuning – towards the European Higher Education Area".

The publication will present the *Tuning* methodology developed on the European level, its key terms and

concepts, as well as Regional Tuning activities and their results. Detail information on the project "Tuning Educational Structures in Europe" is available at the web site http://tuning.unideusto.org/tuningeu/ and in the publication "Tuning Educational Structures in Europe" (edu. Julia Gonzalez i Robert Wagenaar, University of Deusto and University of Groningen, 2003). Within the project, CEP AAEN is publishing a separate, in-depth study on curricula development. This second publication can provide more details and specific guidelines to the ones interested.

The AAEN's Centre wish was to initiate a regional process of tuning. Steps that some of the faculties, project participants, have made independently indicates that we were successful. We hope that this publication will also serve as a useful source and inspiration for continuation of some activities and initiation of new ones.

The project implementation would not be possible without financial support of the Open Society Fund, Balkan Trust for Democracy and Central European Initiative. We are grateful to all project participants for the quality of results and for their further dissemination.

1.
TUNING EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURES IN EUROPE – – AIM, OBJECTIVES AND KEY CONCEPTS

As the title suggests, the main aim of the project is tuning curricula. Central reason for tuning on the European level is achieving *compatibility, comparability and transparency of study programmes*. In the spirit of creation of the European Higher Education Area and other integration processes, it should facilitate easier and expanding student and teaching staff mobility, as well as the mobility on the European labour market.

It is important to stress that "the name *Tuning* has been chosen for the project to reflect the idea that universities do not look for harmonisation of their degree programmes or any sort of unified, prescriptive or definitive European curricula but simply for points of convergence and common understanding. The protection of the rich diversity of European education has been paramount in the *Tuning* project from the very start and the project in no way seeks to restrict the independence of academic and subject specialists, or damage local and national academic authority".
(*Tuning Educational Structures in Europe*, 2003:25)

Within the general aims, *the specific goals* have been set. They are the following:

- To bring about a high level of Europe-wide convergence in Higher Education in the five, later seven, main subject areas (Business, Chemistry, Education Sciences, Geology, History, Mathematics and Physics) by defining commonly accepted professional and learning outcomes.

- To develop professional profiles and desired learning outcomes and competences in terms of generic competences and subject related competences including skills, knowledge and content in the seven subject areas.
- To facilitate transparency in the educational structures and to further innovation through communication of experience and identification of good practice.
- To create European networks able to present examples of good practice, encouraging innovation and quality in the joint reflection and exchange, also for other disciplines.
- To develop and exchange information in relation to the development of curricula in the selected areas, and develop a model curriculum structure expressed in reference points for each area, enhancing the recognition and European integration of diplomas.
- To build bridges between this network of universities and other appropriate qualified bodies in order to produce convergence in the selected subject areas.
- To elaborate a methodology for analyzing common elements and areas of specificity and diversity, and for finding ways to tune them.
- To associate with other subject areas where a similar process can be incorporated through synergy.
- To act in a co-ordinated manner with all the actors involved in the process of tuning educational structures, in particular the Bologna follow-up group, Ministries of Education, Conferences of Rectors (including the EUA), other associations (as EURASHE), Quality Assurance Organisations and Accreditation Bodies, as well as universities.

  (C.f. *Tuning Educational Structures in Europe*, 2003:25-26)

For understanding the *Tuning* methodology it is necessary to know key concepts around which the *Tuning* process is organized. These concepts and the whole methodology are based on new didactic paradigm. In the core of this philosophy is the shift from teacher-centred to student-centred education. Following this shift, the process of teaching is distinguished from the process of learning. This leads to distinction between teachers' aims and students' expected knowledge.

Key terms of the *Tuning* methodology are competences and learning outcomes.

Competences are knowledge, skills and abilities. Goal of education is to "equip" students, through the education process, with certain competences, knowledge, skills and abilities. In the *Tuning* project competences are dynamic combination of knowledge and its application, attitudes and responsibilities that describe learning outcomes of educational programme. The language of competences was born from the idea that such language provides opportunities to express compatibility in a sense of what are graduates able to perform. Also, the language of competences allows expressing common reference points in certain academic fields, offering non-prescriptive frame of reference to academic community. Apart from its importance for education process, teachers and students, the language of competences allows communication with stakeholders – employers – who usually have difficulties to "read" educational aims.

The *Tuning* project makes a distinction between two types of competences – generic and subject specific competences.

Generic competences should be common to all individuals who finish higher education in any field of studies (e.g. foreign language, application of knowledge in practice, computer literacy). Employers and graduate students participate in identifying generic competences. Since one of the main objectives of the *Regional Tuning* project was to identify generic competences, the second part of the publication will be dedicated only to this area.

Subject specific competences are being identified for each subject or field of study and they are more specific. Graduate students and employers should also participate in identifying, evaluating and ranking specific competences.

Learning outcomes are statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after the completion of a process of learning. Learning outcomes are distinct from learning aims, in that they are concerned with the achievements of a learner rather than the overall intentions of a teacher. Learning outcomes are being formulated in the form of competences. The difference between a list of competences and a list of learning outcomes is that by defining a learning outcome one defines a method of teaching and assessment of competence achievement.
Learning outcomes can be formulated on the level of study programme, on the level of qualification and than they define competences that all graduates in certain field should possess. Learning outcomes can also be identified on the level of a group of related subjects, individual course and even on the level of a single class.

2.
TUNING EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURES IN EUROPE – – METHODOLOGY

Traditional methodology of curricula development was positioned in a national context and focused on mono disciplinary studies. In curricula development, the stress was placed on knowledge and content that teachers should "deliver". For this reason it is being said that the traditional methodology is teacher-centred. The *Tuning* methodology approach places a student in the centre of educational process and it is interested in what a student will learn and not in what a teacher will teach. Hence, the competences, generic and subject specific, are in the core of curricula development. Apart from this essential difference, the model that has been developed is better suited for inter and multidisciplinary studies, integrated and joint programmes.

In the *Tuning* project curriculum is being developed in the following phases.

1. Generic competences
Consultation with graduate students, employers and academic staff on importance of 30 already given generic competences, as well as the evaluation of their achievement in the programmes of the participating institutions.

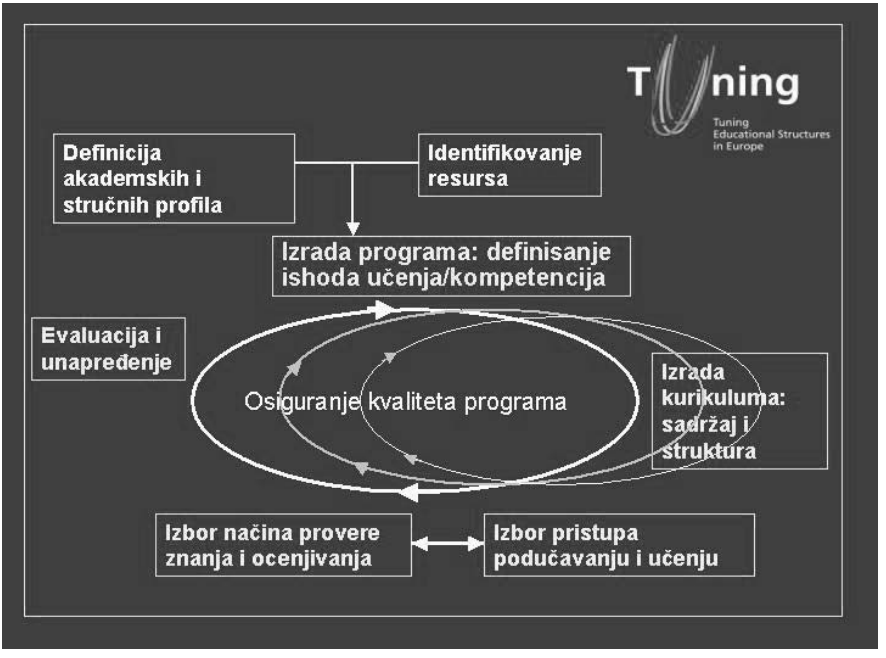
2. Subject specific competences (knowledge, ability and skill) in certain subject areas
Mapping subject areas and identifying programme reference points and specific competences for each of the areas that participate in the project.

3. Role of ECTS as a transfer and accumulation system
ECTS as a tool for curricula development is being connected to learning outcomes and the basis of student workload are working hours.

4. Mapping different approaches to learning and teaching in European countries

5. Quality enhancement
(C.f. *Tuning Educational Stru-ctures in Europe,* 2003)

These steps are best illustrated in graph 1. It is necessary to notice that the process is cyclic and that ones identified core curricula (in the form of competences and tuned through reference points) is not final because it changes together with the needs of society.



3.
REGIONAL TUNING – ACTIVITIES OVERVIEW

Seminar "Learning outcomes, expected knowledge and abilities and ECTS"

The first step in tuning curricula was the seminar "Learning outcomes, expected knowledge and abilities and ECTS". The seminar was held in April 2005 on the Faculty of Political Sciences in Belgrade. Participants were 40 university teachers from Serbia and Macedonia. The lecturers on the seminar were Carita Blomqvist (the National Education Council, Finland, member of the buirou of the Committee for implementation of Lisbon Convention), professor Katherine Isaacs (University in Piza, Italy, Tuning expert for History), Jenny Moon, PhD (Exeter University, England), Norman Sharp (Quality Assurance Agency, Scotland), Jadranka Dimov (consultant to director, the National Emloyment Agency, Serbia). The presentations from the seminar as well as the results are available at the AAEN web pages.

Within these first steps, and as important element of support to academic community, CEP AAEN has formed e-library (http://www.aaen.edu.yu/mainpages/e_biblioteka.html), primarely dedicated to curricula development but later enriched with other publications related to higher education reform.

"Regional Tuning – towards the European Higher Education Area"

The project "Regional Tuning – towards the European Higher Education Area" was launched in May, 2006. Till November 2006 the introductory seminar was held, consultations on generic competences were organized and six thematic networks met to discuss subject related competences.

INTRODUCTORY SEMINAR

Introductory seminar was held on April, 17-21, 2006 in hotel "Norcev" on Fruska Gora. Seminar participants were 43 university teachers, among whom rectors, deans, professors and teaching assistants, from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia. All participants were from the faculties that belong to the group of humanities and social sciences. The aim of the seminar was to introduce the *Tuning* methodology, to identify generic competences and to initiate forming of several thematic networks.

The lectures thematized challenges specific to humanities and social sciences, employability in this area, consultations with stakeholders, development and structure of curricula, relation between learning outcomes, curricula development and assessment. The lecturers were professor Ljubisa Rajic, PhD, University in Belgrade, Jadranka Dimov, National Employment Agency, professor Steve Quarrie, PhD, University in New Castle, professor Fuada Stankovic, PhD, University in Novi Sad, professor Srbijanka Turajlic, PhD, AAEN and junior staff Martina Vukasovic, Jelena Kleut and Predrag Lazetic. All presentations from the seminar are available on the AAEN web site.

Results from the introductory seminar are:

1. List of 40 generic competences, based on the European model but with recognition of regional specifics. The competences identified on the seminar went through the process of evaluation by university teachers, employers and graduate students.
2. Forming six thematic networks was agreed – economy and business, law, psychology, philology, education sciences and journalism – and coordinators for each network were appointed.

CONSULTATIONS ON GENERIC COMPETENCES

On the basis of conclusions made on the introductory seminar a process of consultations on generic competences has been organized. University teachers, employers and graduate students from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia have participated.

THEMATIC NETWORKS MEETING

Participants of thematic networks met in Belgrade on October, 21-22, 2006. Thirty five university teachers from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia attended the meeting. The following networks have been created:

- Economy and Business (coordinator professor Sasho Kjosev, PhD, Faculty of Economics, Skopje);
- Law (coordinator professor Dragan Pantic, PhD, Law Faculty, East Sarajevo);
- Psychology (coordinator Vesna Gavrilov-Jerkovic, PhD, Faculty of Philosophy, Novi Sad);
- Philology (coordinator Tamara Valcic-Bulic, MA, Faculty of Philosophy, Novi Sad);
- Education Science (coordinator professor Violeta

Arnaudova, PhD, Faculty of Philosophy, Skopje);
- Journalism (coordinator Enes Osmancevic, MA, Faculty of Philosophy, Tuzla).

Each group has drafted a list of subject related competences that should form a core curriculum, reference points through which tuning is achieved. For the time being, these lists are incomplete (thus they will not be presented here) and for the further work in this direction it is necessary to broaden the networks and than to consult with employers and graduate students. Having in mind the enthusiasm during the meeting, AAEN strongly believes that the work on defining subject specific competences will continue in future.

4.
GENERIC COMPETENCES

Within the European project three groups of comptences have been defined – instrumental, interpersonal and systemic. These competences will be presented in this part together with the ones added as the „regional". Then we will explain the consultation methodology and final results.

Instrumental competences are:

1. Capacity for analysis and synthesis.
2. Capacity for organisation and planning.
3. Basic general knowledge.
4. Grounding in basic knowledge of the profession.
5. Oral and written communication in your native language.
6. Knowledge of a second language.
7. Elementary computing skills.
8. Information management skills (ability to retrieve and analyse information from different sources).
9. Problem solving.
10. Decision-making.

Interpersonal competences are:

1. Critical and self-critical abilities.
2. Teamwork.
3. Interpersonal skills.
4. Ability to work in an interdisciplinary team.
5. Ability to communicate with experts in other fields.
6. Appreciation of diversity and multiculturality.
7. Ability to work in an international context.
8. Ethical commitment.

Systemic competences are:

1. Capacity for applying knowledge in practice.
2. Research skills.
3. Capacity to learn.
4. Capacity to adapt to new situations.
5. Capacity for generating new ideas (creativity).
6. Leadership.
7. Understanding of cultures and customs of other countries.
8. Ability to work autonomously.
9. Project design and management.
10. Initiative and entrepreneurial spirit.
11. Concern for quality.
12. Will to succeed.

Regional Tuning participants have modified some of the given competences and added 10 more competences that they recognized as region specific. They are introduced as important because of the transitional character of the societies and because of the recent past. These "regional" competences are:

1. Social responsibility.
2. Critical thinking and reading.
3. Understanding phenomena in social and historical context.
4. Understanding the spirit of time.
5. Understanding gender and gender relations.
6. General culture.
7. Will to learn.
8. Ability to work individually.
9. Gaining abilities for professional work.
10. Ability to synthesize literature.

5.
CONSULTATIONS ON GENERIC COMPETENCES

Graduate students, employers and university teachers participated in the consultations and for each group a separate questionnaire was prepared. Joint, and at the same time central, part of the questionnaire was evaluation of competences, in two directions. The first one was regarding the perceived importance that a certain competence has in professional work. The second one was regarding the level of achievement of certain competence in higher education. Each competence was evaluated in these terms, and at the end the participants were asked to rank five competences that they recognized as most important for professional work. Graduate students and employers were asked to evaluate general adequacy of knowledge and abilities gained in higher education for the professional work. Graduate students were asked to evaluate employment opportunities in their profession.

All questions were formulated on the basis of questionnaire prepared within the European *Tuning* project. It should be noted that CEP AAEN has not questioned the quality of the questionnaire because it was led by an idea that it is important to gain data that could be compared with the results of the European consultations.

The questionnaires were translated into Albanian, Bosnian, Croatian, Macedonian and Serbian language. Polling was done through the AAEN web pages (www.aaen.edu.yu/upitnici). It started in June and ended in September 2006.

During consultation period, CEP AAEN and project participants informed university teachers, faculties, universities, individuals, companies, firms, organisations, employment agencies, professional associations, alumni organisations and chambers of commerce about the process and invited them to take part. Information package with the invitation was sent by e-mail. The AAEN sent more than 3000 e-mails during the period.

Results of consultations

To interpret the results of the consultation a special task force group has been created and its participants were: professor Jelena Mihaljev-Djigunovic, PhD, professor Sasho Kjosev, PhD, professor Dragan Pantic, PhD, Vesna Gavrilov-Jerkovic, PhD, professor Violeta Arnaudova, PhD, Tamara Valcic-Bulic, MA and Enes Osmancevic, MA.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE CONSULTATIONS

Electronic questionnaire was filled by 348 persons. Out of that 36 were employers, 145 graduate students and 167 university teachers. Obviously unequal representation of graduates and academics from one side and employers from the other could be explained with the fact that the whole project has started as an academic community initiative. For that reason it spread faster and more efficiently in academic circles.

Inspite of AAEN's great effort not only to inform, but also to establish a direct contact with employers, this especially important group is underrepresented. Already during the introductory seminar it has been noticed that there is a lack of awarness of the role of stakeholders – how they could

contribute, participate and affect curricula developments. It is said than that the employers' awarenes is at very low level. That could be the main reason for such small response.

Also, there is a possibility that the institutions, firms and companies lack adequate human resources services or departments that would monitor company's needs and employees achievement and who would be able to articulate their observation in this and in similar initiatives.

Similarly, a lack of alumni organizations has been observed. Together with many other roles this organisations, born in Anglo-Saxon culture, have is maintaining the connection between higher education institution and its students. Without this open channel of communication, and only few faculties in the region have their alumni organizations, it was difficult to reach this target group.

Because of the relatively small number of participants in the consultations, the results should be viewed as tendencies and guidelines. The pioneer attempt AAEN has made on the regional level should be developed further and it should continue.

IMPORTANCE OF COMPETENCES

The consultation participants were given an opportunity to evaluate each of the 40 competences in terms of importance it has for the work in their profession. Although all three groups answered this question, the answers provided by graduate students and employers are more important and relevant.

Graduates and employers regard all of the 40 competences as very important. Precisely, over two thirds of graduates and employers ranked each competence as important and very important.

Asked to rank 5 most important competences graduate students selected (in a given order):

1. Capacity for applying knowledge in practice.
2. Capacity for analysis and synthesis.
3. Basic general knowledge.
4. Problem identifying and solving.
5. Active knowledge of a second language/ability to work autonomously.

Five most important competences for employers are (in a given order):

1. Team and group work.
2. Capacity for applying knowledge in practice.
3. Active knowldge of a second language.
4. Project design and management.
5. Grounding in basic knowledge of the profession.

It is interesting to notice that *the capacity for applying knowledge in practice and active knowledge of a second language* both groups place high in their ranking. Also, basic general knowledge (graduates) and grounding in basic knowledge of the profession (employers) could be taken as very similar, maybe the difference is only in perspective. Both groups selected skills and abilities that are concrete and practical, rather than choosing more general knowledge.

University teachers selected the following 5 competences as most important (in a given order):

1. Capacity for applying knowledge in practice.
2. Capacity for analysis and synthesis.

3. Ability to work autonomously.
4. Research skills.
5. Decision-making.

Three of the five competences chosen by the university teachers match the competences that graduate students ranked as most important - capacity for applying knowledge in practice, capacity for analysis and synthesis and ability to work autonomously.

It is interesting to notice which competences only small minority placed among 5 most important ones. For university teachers the least important competences are understanding phenomena in social and historical context, understanding of cultures and customs of other countries and will to learn. Employers consider the least important basic general knowledge, critical and self-critical abilities, social responsibility and will to succeed. Graduate students think that the least important are understanding the spirit of time, understanding gender and gender relations and appreciation of diversity and multiculturality. These findings could be regarded as worrying because the role of higher education is not only to make students capable of performing professional tasks but also to make them responsible, aware and critical citizens.

Competences that graduate students and employers from the European Union stressed as the most important are:

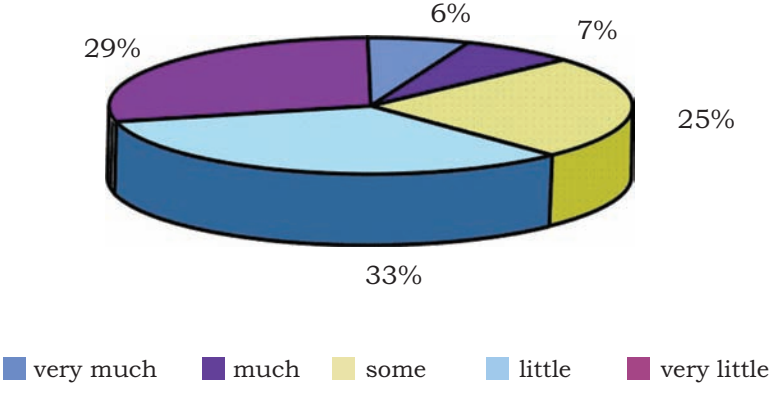
- Capacity for analysis and synthesis.
- Capacity to learn.
- Problem solving.
- Capacity for applying knowledge in practice.
- Capacity to adapt to new situations.
- Concern for quality.

Capacity for analysis and synthesis, problem identifying and solving, as well as capacity for application of knowledge in practice are also on the regional list of the most important competences.

ACHIEVEMENT OF COMPETENCES

Graduate students were asked to evaluate adequacy of education for their professional work. Almost two thirds of the participants think that the education they received is not adequate.

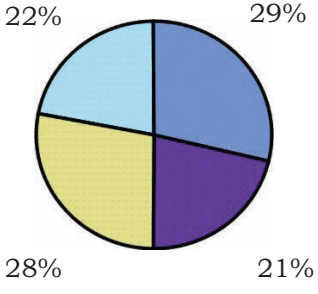
Do you feel that the education you received at the University has been adequate?



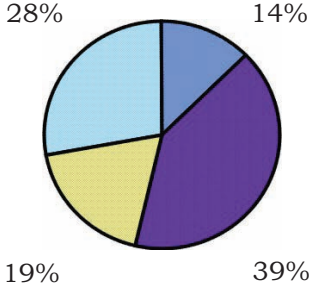
The consultation participants gave their estimates to what extent, level each of the competences has been achieved in higher education. We will focus on achievement of competences that graduates and employers selected as most important.

Active Knowledge of a Second Language

graduate students

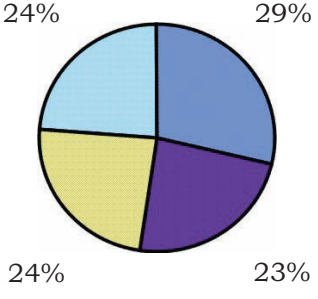


employers



Basic General Knowledge

graduate students



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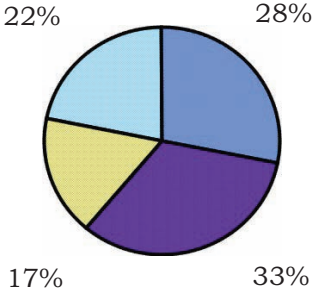
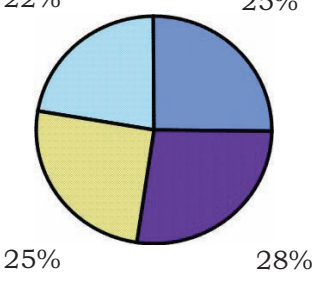


Problem Identifying and Solving

graduate students



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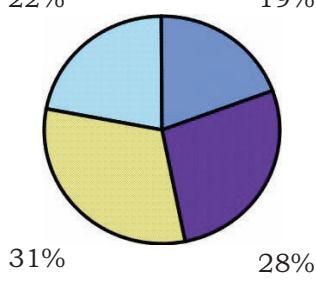

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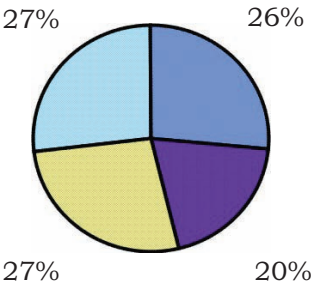
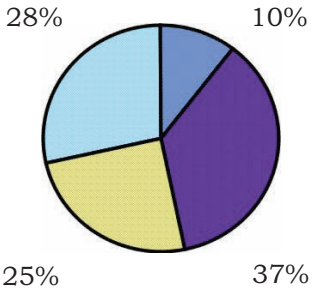
Capacity to Learn

graduate students

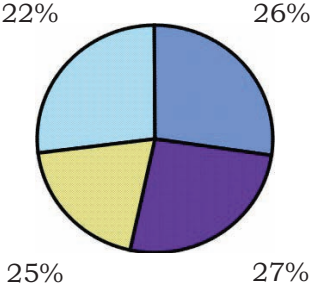


employers



Team and Group Work

graduate students



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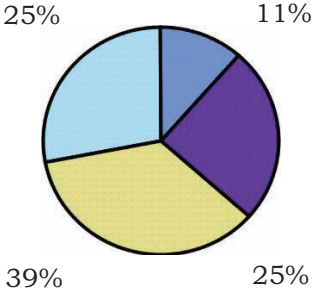
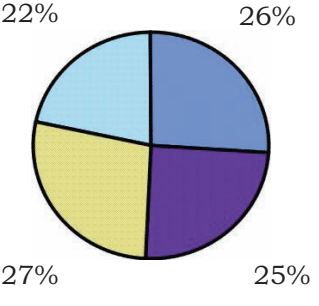
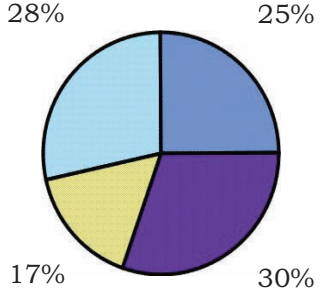


Project Design and Management

graduate students



employers



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Answering the above questions graduate students and employers were answering the question: to what extent university education trained or thought student to perform certain tasks. Finding that for some of the most important competences graduates and employers think they were not achieved at all is quite alarming. This data could be explained by the fact that apart from basic general knowledge and knowledge of a second language, other competences are not at all treated in higher education. They are, although very important for both graduates and employers, viewed as skills students should gain outside the education system.

It should be noted that the structure of answers is very much diversified, and there is no common agreement on whether a competence is achieved or not. One of the decisive elements among graduate students was they current employment position – if they are currently employed, if they are continuing their studies or if they still search for a job. Actually, the ones employed ranked higher skills and more practical knowledge. The ones who pursue further studies ranked higher more general and theoretical knowledge and the competences related to scientific work. It is possible that it was difficult for the consultations participants to separate knowledge they gained during education, and the one they gained during their work or further development. For that reason they attributed highest achievement to the competences they had no matter where they gained them.

6.
CONCLUSIONS ON GENERIC COMPETENCES

The conclusions on generic competences have been formulated on the basis of survey results, expert lectures and discussions during the meetings within the project "Regional Tuning":

- All stakeholders, and before all employers, professional associations and graduate students, should participate in identifying competences (both generic and subject related). Higher education institutions should not close themselves from the surroundings and develop their curricula on the basis of perception of tendencies and development but on the basis of relevant data.
- Among stakeholders, it is necessary to develop and nourish an idea of their participation in formulating competences because that is the way they can influence curricula development. In the region, employers have very low level of such awareness and efforts should be made to improve it.
- Needs of employers and labour market are very important but not sole factors that should define competences. Employers should be aware that they cannot expect "a ready made product" with no further investments. On the contrary, further training of employees should become a regular practice.
- Providing students with competences for professional work is a key task of higher education, but it is not the only task. Developing a sense of responsibility, tolerance and other values of contemporary society does not belong to the needs of the labour market, but it belongs to the needs of society. In the South East

Europe region and in the field of humanities and social sciences this need is even more present in the European Union countries.

CONTINUATION OF CONSULTATIONS ON GENERIC COMPETENCES

Members of the task force group and participants of the thematic networks meeting stated that the consultations on generic competences should continue. To avoid some of the previous downsides, participants suggested:

- To place responsibility for consultation polling on higher education institutions who would then establish contact with their graduates and with employers in their subject areas.
- To organize polling via print questionnaire.
- To revise the size and the number of questions, specifically to narrow the list of generic competences to avoid repetition and possible misunderstanding.
- To introduce a question on student average grade during studies.

7.
GENERIC COMPETENCES – WHAT NEXT?

Once identified generic competences should not remain a list of “nice wishes”. They are the basis for formulating learning outcomes and they should find their place in curriculum. Some of the competences will deserve a whole course or module (e.g. computer literacy, active knowledge of second language). Some of the competences can be developed within the existing courses or modules (e.g. team and group work, communication skills, capacity for analysis and synthesis).

Although not all competences are equally relevant for all subject areas that does not mean that some should be totally neglected. To certain level each of the competences should be developed.

In the publication “Curricula Development”, prepared and published by the AAEN Centre for Education Policy, you can find detail information on connection between competences, learning outcomes, ECTS and assessment.

8.
"REGIONAL TUNING" – FURTHER ACTIVITIES

Activities towards the regional tuning have just started. Alternative Academic Educational Network shares the will of the project participants to continue with this initiative. Plans in this direction include:

- Further activities related to consultations on generic competences.
- Further activities in formulating subject related competences within the thematic networks.
- Consultations on subject related competences.
- Support to faculties and universities in development of curricula based on competences.
- Promoting tuning in general public.