



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Erasmus + project No. 585961-EPP-1-2017-1-AL-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP (2017 -2926/001 -001)

*“GRaduates Advancement and Development of
University capacities in Albania”*

GRADUA

Graduates’ Profile Survey Methodological Guidelines and Methodological notes for Graduates Employment Status

Tirana, 2020

"This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein"

Graduates’ Profile Survey: Methodological Guidelines

The present guidelines are mainly based on more than 20 years experience in developing graduates’ surveys in Italy of AlmaLaurea Interuniversity Consortium, partner in the **585961 GRADUA Project**. The guidelines want to provide some insights on the methodology to run the graduates’ profile survey, from the selection of the cohort to the presentation of the results, as a guide for developing similar surveys in third countries.

In case of GRADUA Project, not all exclusion criteria were applied. The present guidelines can represent the baseline for Albanian partners in improving the future reports, by applying gradually more exclusion criteria, considering the future response rates in order to have a representative sample for applying such criteria.

Since 2020, the GRADUA platform developed by AlmaLaurea in the framework of the above mentioned project, was transferred in Albania, on Qendra Ndërinstitucionale e Rrjetit Akademik Shqipar (RASH - Academic Network of Albania) server: <https://gradua.rash.al/>, on benefit of the Albanian Universities, students, graduates and other stakeholders.

Second part of the present documents, presents some insights regarding the future opportunities in capitalize the Gradua platform for running Graduates Employment Status survey.

Part I:

GRADUATES' PROFILE SURVEY

METHODOLOGICAL GUIDELINES

I.1 What is the Graduates' Profile?

The Graduates' Profile is a survey which looks at the features of Italian graduates in a certain year. The survey Report contains an analysis of the features and performance of graduates in that specific year, focusing on a number of variables. These include: age at graduation; examination grades; final degree grade; degree completion time; parents' educational qualifications; social background; secondary school qualification type and grade; class attendance; study experiences abroad; use of laboratories; traineeships or internships; time devoted to final dissertation; assessment of the university experience; knowledge of foreign languages; IT skills; work experiences during studies; intention to pursue further studies; preferred professional field; desired job characteristics.

Since 1998, when the Graduates' Profile was first launched, every year AlmaLaurea is publishing the Report on graduates profile who achieved their title in the Consortium's universities. The aim is that of:

- outlining the main features of Italian graduates;
- providing a point of reference for those who have an interest in Italian universities;
- contributing to disseminate the culture of assessments within education systems;
- providing a guidance tool for the choice of university courses.

I.2 Who can benefit from the survey?

The Graduates' Profile is addressed to all those who are interested in the Italian tertiary education system, including young people and their families, people in charge with guidance activities, companies (public/private, Italian/foreign), the Ministry of Education, University and Research as well as individual universities (in particular, the governing bodies of universities, faculties and assessment units).

I.3 Which cohort does the survey examine?

The survey looks at the cohort of graduates who achieved their title in the Consortium's universities in a certain year. In 1998, when the Graduates' Profile was first launched, it involved a limited number of universities (13). It has then significantly expanded and, in 2020, it included 76 universities.

Sources.

The content of the database is gathered from different sources and at different times. It includes:

- *information from administrative sources* – this is provided by universities and has to do with faculties, degree courses, degree grades, length of degree courses, final thesis titles and supervising professors, etc.;
- *information provided by the students just before their graduation* – this includes self-certifications on study experiences abroad, work experiences during studies, etc., as well as self-assessments on the knowledge of foreign languages and IT skills, the willingness to move for work reasons, etc.;

The combination of administrative information and the students' questionnaires results in a large database on Italian graduates, upon which the Graduates' Profile survey is based.

I.4 How to access the data

Over the years, the survey data has become increasingly visible and easy to access. In addition to a printed volume, which is presented every year in May, at the annual AlmaLaurea Graduates' Profile Congress, the survey data is always available online (www.almalaurea.it/universita/profilo).

While in 1998 online data could only be broken down by university and faculty, it is now possible to refine a search by a number of variables, including degree course type, university, faculty, degree course, as well as by comparison with previous years.

Clearly, these variables are referred to the Italian university system and reflect the organization of tertiary education in Italy – also taking into account the University Reform implemented as of academic year 2000/2001. However, to be able to export AlmaLaurea's experience abroad, such variables need to be adjusted to the specific context.

Some useful advice.

To compile a correct Graduates' Profile, a comprehensive and reliable database is needed, based on accurate information. To this purpose, the following actions are required:

- i) collaborating with university administrative offices, constantly following their work and motivating their staff, explaining the aims and benefits of the Graduates' Profile;
- ii) ensuring adequate data matching (between administrative data and the questionnaires) to create a comprehensive database;
- iii) constantly monitoring the share of students who fill in the questionnaires, trying to make sure that most of them do.

I.5 Exclusion criteria

While defining the cohort which will be analysed in the Graduates' Profile, AlmaLaurea applies several exclusion criteria, based on the Italian experience (when testing this kind of survey in another country, these criteria need to be adjusted to the specific university system features). These have been elaborated on the basis of the experience acquired in Italy by AlmaLaurea researchers over many years – and are therefore the result of great efforts spent on this project. The criteria used by AlmaLaurea in Italy are listed below, to serve as a guideline. However, for international partners who wish to test the Graduates' Profile survey for the first time, it is recommended that they use simpler criteria and adapt them to their country's university context. Exclusion criteria are applied in the following order: first, to graduates; second, to questionnaires; third, to universities.

GRADUATES – Exclusion Criteria

Particularly between 2001 and 2005, Italian universities included a few peculiar cohorts of students. Some of them had their professional experience recognized for the purpose of their degree course completion and often did not attend their faculty, or barely knew it at all. Therefore, we had to ponder which graduates should be included in the Graduates' Profile. It was decided that for Graduates to be included in the survey, at least half of the credits required for their degree completion had to have been earned through educational activities organized by their university. Indeed, if this was not the case, they would not be able to provide a reliable and meaningful assessment of the university experience. Sometimes, graduates belonging to peculiar cohorts cannot be immediately recognized on the basis of the available administrative data. Significant efforts were therefore made to analyse and establish which operating parameters should be used to effectively recognize them.

Thus, the Italian survey leaves out some 'peculiar' cohorts of students, that is students whose work experience was recognized by the university as their main learning activity and earned them at least half of their university credits. This is the case of special

conventions applied to health operators, members of the police or the armed forces, public officials and other professionals. Present in different universities, these graduates rarely fill in the AlmaLaurea survey questionnaire.

Once the graduates who are eligible for the survey have been selected, further exclusion criteria are applied to questionnaires.

QUESTIONNAIRS – Exclusion Criteria

Within the Graduates' Profile survey, questionnaires can be excluded on the basis of three main criteria. One has to do with *completeness*, another with the *plausibility of answers* and the third concerns the *time for completion*.

As far as the *completeness of answers* is concerned, two parameters are applied.

- i) If a graduate has provided information for at least 3 out of the 6 variables of the questionnaire which are regarded as essential for the purpose of the Graduates' Profile: i) *parents' educational qualifications*; ii) *class attendance*; iii) *study experiences abroad*; iv) *work experiences during studies*; v) *overall assessment of the university experience*; vi) *intention to pursue further studies*; then the first completeness parameter is satisfied.
- ii) For each section of the questionnaire, excluding the personal data section, the ratio between the number of answers provided and the number of answers required is calculated. Then, the average of these ratios is determined. If the average is $\geq 25\%$, the questionnaire fulfils the second completeness parameter.

If all these parameters are satisfied, then the plausibility of a questionnaire should be *Plausibility criteria* are applied to check whether a questionnaire is 'dubious' or contains inconsistent answers. The Italian questionnaire contains 8 sets of questions: i) *knowledge of foreign languages*; ii) *IT skills*; iii) *relationship with the academic staff*; iv) *student services and living conditions in university towns*; v) *preferred business areas*; vi) *relevant aspects for the desired job*; vii) *preferred geographic areas where to work*; viii) *preferred types of employment contracts*. A questionnaire is considered dubious when there is little

variability among answers (the same answer has been provided for the whole set of questions), as the graduate could have answered without even reading the questions (see Table. 1):

Table. 1. Example of a suspicious set of answers

“Are you interested in working in the following business areas? (please answer to all questions)”

Example of “same modality of answer”:

Administration, accounting	Yes, definitely	More yes than no	More no than yes	No, definitely
Technical assistance	X			
Management	X			
Finance	X			
Legal	X			
Marketing, communication, public relations	X			
Organization, planning	X			
Human resources, recruitment, training	X			
Production	X			
Research and Development	X			
Information systems, EDP	X			
Purchases	X			
Logistics, distribution	X			
Secretarial, general affairs	X			
Marketing, sales	X			

If less than five sets of answers show poor variability, the questionnaire fulfils the first plausibility criterion.

Another plausibility parameter concerns possible inconsistencies between the answers to similar questions which may be located in different sections of the questionnaire. In the Italian questionnaire, 4 different cases have been established:

- i) inconsistency concerning the study experience;
- ii) inconsistency concerning work;
- iii) inconsistency concerning the knowledge of foreign languages;
- iv) inconsistency concerning IT skills.

A consistency check is a simple comparison between the answers provided by a graduate to two similar questions. If these answers are inconsistent, it means there has been a misunderstanding or a lack of attention while filling in the questionnaire. If less than 2 inconsistencies are found in a questionnaire, this fulfils the second plausibility parameter. On the contrary, if many inconsistencies are found, the reliability of the answers is questioned.

Finally, when all criteria for completeness and plausibility are fulfilled, the most complex of criteria is applied. This concerns *the average time spent on each answer*.

Thanks to its many years of experience, AlmaLaurea has conducted a careful analysis and empirically proved that the questionnaire cannot be correctly compiled if the average time spent on each question is less than 4 seconds.

To conclude, if a questionnaire fulfils the three sets of parameters (completeness, plausibility and time spent on the questionnaire), this can be used for the purpose of the Graduates' Profile survey and is included in the analysis.

UNIVERSITIES – Exclusion Criteria

Provided that it has successfully gathered administrative data for all its graduates, a university is included in the Graduates' Profile survey if its rate of filled-in questionnaires is high. This rate is not affected by graduates who are not compatible with the survey, on the basis of the exclusion criteria. The rate of filled-in questionnaires is the ratio

between the number of questionnaires which can be used for the survey and the number of graduates. If the rate is 50% or more, the university is included in the survey. Otherwise, it will not be considered. This last criterion is a significant one in the case of the Italian survey, which involves almost all Italian universities with very high rates of filled-in questionnaires (above 90%). However, it is not very meaningful in pilot surveys which involve few universities.

I.6 Cleaning the database and assessing representativeness

Have all or almost all questionnaires been collected?

Among Italian universities which are part of AlmaLaurea, for example, not all the faculties have always managed to collect questionnaires from all their graduates – or at least a good percentage of them. Sometimes, whole universities or single faculties have not succeeded to do so. To tackle this issue, a specific division of AlmaLaurea constantly monitors the rate of filled-in questionnaires for each university and interacts with administrative offices to spot – and possibly solve – problems which can be triggered by different causes.

In general, participation in the survey increases when, within a faculty, students are aware that the questionnaire is a tool to assess their university experience, but it also works as a CV which can help them find a job. In particular, graduates who already have a job or do not intend to immediately look for one are also required to fill in the questionnaire, in order to provide their feedback on the degree course they have just completed.

Three times in a year – at the end of each graduation session – AlmaLaurea gets in contact with all the graduates who have not yet filled in the questionnaire, inviting them to do so (except for those graduates who have explicitly stated that they do not wish to be part of the database). In some universities, this has led to a significant increase in the number of collected questionnaires.

Has the questionnaire been entirely filled in?

In addition to the issue of graduates not filling in the questionnaire, some of them may also do so only partially or in an unreliable manner. Sometimes, some sections are not completed, with no specified reason. All these situations should be monitored. In general, these questionnaires are not considered in the survey, but they are still taken into account in the proportion of results.

Checking that the questionnaire is clear and consistent

Checking that the questionnaire is clear and consistent is the most difficult task when assessing a questionnaire. Sometimes, interviewees do not follow the rules. It may happen, for example, that they select two answers when they are required to only choose one (an error in the questionnaire programming), or that they answer a question when they should not – because they disregard the relevant filter question – or that they select the ‘Other’ option without adding any information in the relevant space.

Has the interviewee taken the questionnaire seriously?

Explaining how to assess whether a questionnaire has been filled out in a serious manner is not easy. For example, when questions are to be answered with a score between 1 and 4, it can be assumed that the lack of an obviously schematic set of answers (the same answer for the whole batch of questions) suggests seriousness. In addition, it may happen that some graduates deliberately provide nonsensical answers. It is therefore recommended to have a general idea of the features which may suggest that the questionnaire was not taken seriously. In any case, only during the analysis of data is it possible to systematically assess this.

Statistical procedures.

Having checked the questionnaires and sorted the cases of missing answers (for example, when an interviewee does not reply to specific questions) as well as the missing cases (for example, when data is unavailable) and having decided whether to include them in the survey or not, the analysis of data can begin. At this stage, a statistical software should be employed (SPSS, SAS, Stata or others). To begin with, simple statistical operations should be carried out to perform a descriptive analysis of the main outcomes (frequencies and charts with percentages, based on the examined variables).

Correlation tables are useful to spot a possible relationship between two variables – an independent variable and a dependent variable.

Clearly, different types of analysis can be performed depending on the kind of variables under consideration. As for quantitative variables, summary measures can be used, such as mean, median and mode – which are very intuitive and facilitate the interpreting of data. Similarly, distance measurements – such as standard deviation or variance – can be used to analyse some variables. As for qualitative variables, charts can certainly be a first useful tool to sum up the main features; then, contingency tables – or cross tabulations – can be employed to display the frequencies related to two categorical variables at once (absolute values).

For a more in-depth study, following a first descriptive analysis of the main features, a multivariate statistical analysis may be performed. It could be used, for example, to determine the influence of some variables on others and the correlations between different variables. Multivariate analyses need to be interpreted carefully and with the help of specialists.

I.7 Graphical display of the results

Representing and disseminating the results of statistical analyses in an effective manner is another crucial step in the process. Indeed, statistical accuracy and a clean database are not sufficient to guarantee a good analysis of data. The main results must be summed up in charts and tables which can make them clear for the general public, and not just for specialists.

An incomplete or unclear table or a poor communication of the results can compromise the whole survey.

It is therefore important to spend a few minutes looking at the features of good graphical representations. Here, the attention will be focused on the presentation of the results of descriptive analyses (univariate, bivariate or multivariate analyses).

Results can be described using tables or charts. What is important is that the table/chart and its title are self-explicative. In other words, they need to include all the elements required to interpret the data, in order for the reader to understand without having to rely on the accompanying text. Both for charts and tables, the title is crucial and should communicate:

- i) the subject of the analysis;
- ii) the examined variables;
- iii) the type of statistical analysis performed.

Displaying results in a table

A well-designed table should be:

- i) efficient* (it should cost as little as possible)
- ii) comprehensive* (it should contain all the information required to correctly understand the data)
- iii) appropriate* (it should be consistent with the aims of the survey)

In other words, each table should fulfil the so-called *principle of parsimony* – only information which is necessary to understand the table itself should be displayed, as an excess of figures may confuse the reader. Compared to charts, tables allow for a larger quantity of information to be displayed.

Displaying results in a chart

Graphical representations are very efficient tools to help readers understand the data. Usually, charts contain little, condensed information and do not add any details, compared to tables. However, charts certainly have a strong communicative impact and, again, they are easy to understand for the general public, even with little statistical skills.

To draw a chart correctly, the following aspects should be taken into account.

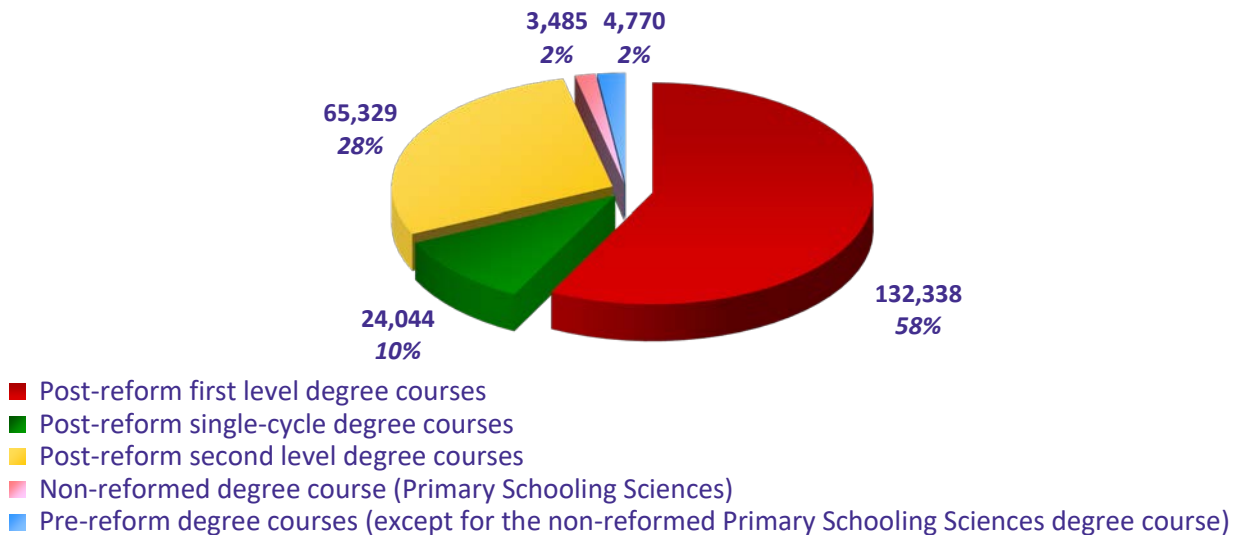
- i) **The scale of the axes**, as any variation of the scale would considerably change the reader’s visual perception, minimizing or augmenting the differences of value reported in the chart.
- ii) **Ordering the bars on the basis of a certain answer** – if differences between male and female interviewees are to be highlighted, for example, the chart bars can be ordered on the basis of one type of answer, as this helps visualize the main differences between the two cohorts.
- iii) **Choosing colours to represent different answers** within each variable. A certain visual impact is important when displaying scale variables. For example, when portraying a feedback on a specific service or the overall assessment of the university experience, a scale of colours should be used, ranging from warm red shades to cold green shades (red shades for negative feedbacks, orange/yellow for intermediate results and green shades for positive feedbacks). This also applies to cases where the possible answers have a natural bottom-to-top order – for example, about parents’ educational qualifications. Here, one colour may be employed in its different shades – for example, gradually fading from dark blue to light blue – so as to reflect the natural order of the possible answers.

- iv) **Choosing the chart title**, which should include – in a few lines – the subject of the analysis, the examined variables and the type of statistical analysis performed.

An important feature of charts is that they allow to select and highlight the key (and also most important) information reported in a table. Since a chart cannot contain all the values reported in a table, the most important data should always be selected, in order to produce a simple and immediate graphical representation. Univariate, bivariate or multivariate analyses have different graphical representations. Since they are very easy to read, charts are used to highlight the main features of the population analyzed.

Pie charts are used to provide an overview of the situation (see fig. 2):

Fig. 2 – Graduates by course type



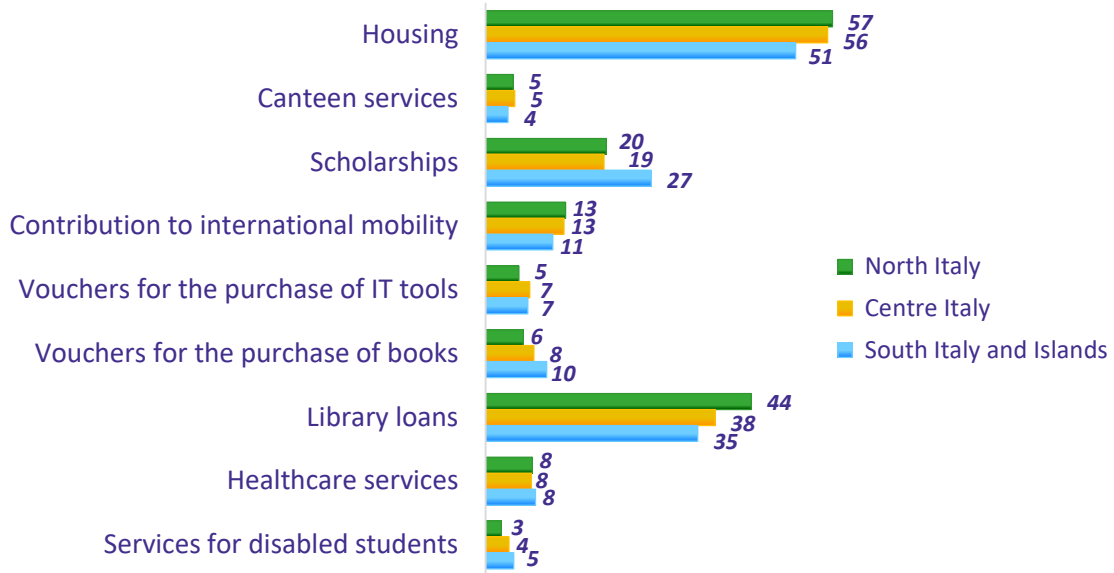
Simple bar charts are used to represent frequency distributions in absolute values or percentages (fig. 3):

Fig. 3 – Percentage of graduates who gained study experiences abroad through EU programmes, by degree subject area



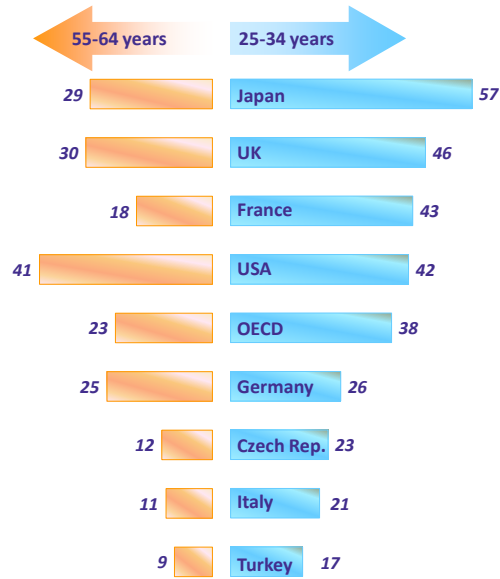
Grouped or two-sided bar charts are often used to compare how the same variable is distributed in different populations. Fig. 4 is an example of a *grouped bar chart* displaying the distribution of graduates who benefited from student support services, divided on the basis of their university's geographical location.

Fig. 4 – Percentage of graduates who benefited from student support services, by university’s geographical location



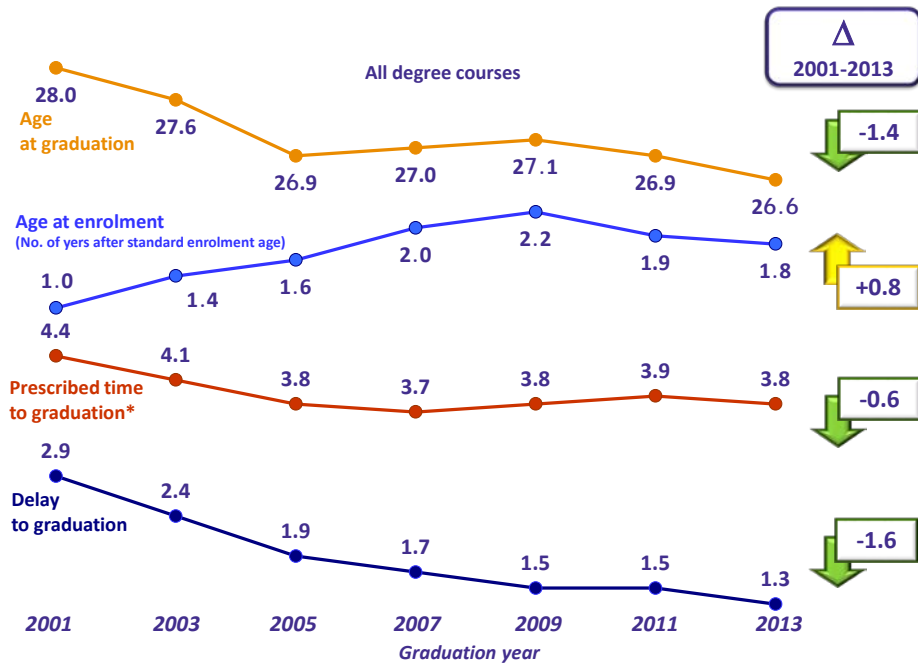
Two-sided bar charts (see fig. 5) can display, for example, the different distribution of the population with tertiary education among age groups, in different countries. Here, this kind of chart is effective in that it immediately displays the differences between two different cohorts. The bars can be set in an increasing/decreasing order based on one of the two aspects (in this case, data was displayed in decreasing order in relation with the 25-34 years of age group). This is an effective way to highlight the differences between the two cohorts under consideration.

Fig. 5 – Population with tertiary education, by age group (percentage values)



Broken line graphs are used to display the development of a phenomenon over time (see fig. 6).

Fig. 6 –Age to graduation – components (average values)



* 5 instead of 2 years for single-cycle degree courses.

PART II:

**METHODOLOGICAL
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GRADUATE
TRACKING**

II.1 Introduction

The global employment issue and the labour sector are transforming very rapidly, and the indicators related to the trends are expected to be accelerated after the COVID-19 pandemic. Most jobs will disappear by 2040 and will be replaced by new ones. From the demand size, highly skilled and socially engaged people are both requested in an increasing trend. The EU's New Strategic Agenda 2019-2024 seeks to step up investment in education and skills and it needs to be underpinned by a single European learning space as envisaged in the European Education Area by 2025. To reach this objective, there is a need to improve data availability to help policy makers in addressing higher education challenges, as described in the renewed EU Agenda for Higher Education (EC 2017).

The surveys regarding the employment status of graduates become more and more important for many countries and regions with the intention to lay the ground for sustainable European wide graduate research.

The employability of graduates leaving education and training is in this sense a matter of many countries. In this context, as European Union underline as well, *"skills are a pathway to employability and prosperity. With the right skills, people are equipped for good-quality jobs and can fulfil their potential as confident, active citizens. In a fast-changing global economy, skills will largely determine competitiveness and the capacity to drive innovation. They are a pull factor for investment and a catalyst in the virtuous circle of job creation and growth. They are key to social cohesion"* (EC, 2016).

So, higher education institutions aim at equipping their students with competencies required to successfully enter a labour market and to maintain their employability throughout their working lives. Each country, expect from Higher education graduates to set a positive impulse to the economy and society in terms of innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship.

The need to invest in education and training represents a crucial requirement in maintain and improve deployable skills in the country population.

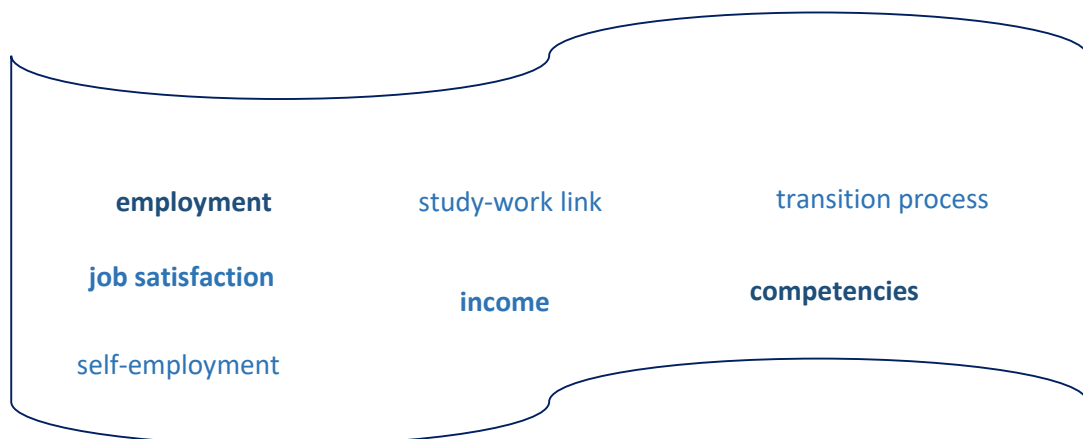
The most important step to achieve these policy goals is the availability of quality data that allows for conclusions and recommendations in a comparative perspective. Such data will help the sector to have larger view of aspects and outcomes of higher education, such as unemployment, the quality of the education-job match, career development and prospects, skills and competencies, international experiences of graduates, etc.

Albania faces the same problems and challenges, and GRADUA project can represent an important contribution for future actions and initiatives in Graduates Tracking survey, by using the Gradua platform as baseline for surveys.

The aggregate pilot survey in the universities that are part for the GRADUA platform could comprise surveys of all types of higher education graduates, at different years after graduation.

Such survey can to analyse main indicators such as the employment status of graduates (employment/unemployment rate), employment characteristics of the main job, etc.

The data will allow for different types of analysis, so far not possible in existing graduate surveys: single report including different higher education organizations, which educational experiences lead to the best results on the labour market, etc.



II.2 Possible GRADUA pilot survey on employment status

Employment status survey could represent a new approach of analysing the graduates employment status. The pilot survey should be run in the universities that are part of the Gradua platform (hosted at RASH).

One of the first question for the implementation of the Albanian employment status survey is whether to use surveys or administrative data. A survey can hardly be based on administrative data. Careers of graduates can be tracked by combining data from universities' administrations with typically, privacy and social security data restrictions. Mostly this is due to data protection regulations and/or because variables necessary to combine the different sources are missing. Some variables such as skills and competences, employments status, income, etc. cannot be captured by each university administrative data.

Online surveys are recommended as the survey method to be used by all participating Higher Education organizations as they facilitate data collection and processing, thus presenting the most cost-efficient method. A diversity of survey methods, tools or softwares should be avoided in order to not impair the comparability of data.

Recommendations on the design of a Albanian graduate study should cover the following three dimensions: Institutional coverage, degree coverage and time of observation of a Albanian graduate study:

- ✓ Institutional coverage: the consortium should unanimously agree to the coverage of graduates from the universities involved.
- ✓ Degree coverage: according to the stakeholders, graduates from Bachelor or equivalent level and Master or equivalent level form the core group of graduates to be covered. When looking at the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) orientations, a clear majority of stakeholders recommends the inclusion of all orientations in the survey.
- ✓ Time of observation: the time of (first) observation according to the stakeholders should be approximately 24-36 months after graduation.

II.2.1 Definition of the target group

A clear definition of the target group (graduates) is essential. The target group should be defined as follows:

- Graduates from the academic year XXXX. Given that the pilot survey will take place in the second part of the year XXXX + 24-36 months, the report covers therefore graduates at 2-3 years after graduation.

The pilot survey should include all graduates on the basis of the Albanian Higher Education classification (bachelor, master, associate degree)¹.

- Graduates are not defined by place of birth or residence, but by the city in which they graduated from a higher education programme in the academic year XXXX.
- In principle, all institutions involved in GRADUA initiative offering programmes on bachelor, master and associate degree.

II.2.2 Topics

The pilot study covers the following key topics: employment status, job characteristic, job activity sector, job satisfaction, income, etc.

II.2.3 Survey method

¹ AlmaLaurea case and experience: comments on some cohorts which have not been investigated: the AlmaLaurea survey did not include those graduates who have achieved more than an academic qualification. In particular, as for first- and second-level degree holders, only the second-level degree has been taken into consideration, whereas in case of students having two degrees of the same level, only the first one (i.e., in terms of graduation date) was considered for the analysis. If a student earned a Primary Education Sciences degree programme and then a second cycle degree, prominence has been given to the second-cycle degree. It was also decided to exclude the graduates who have earned an academic degree on the basis of special conventions. This case mainly regards: workers of the health sector whose professional experience were acknowledged by the University of Chieti-Pescara, which awarded them a first-level degree in one of the health sectors' faculties; the members of the armed forces and police officers who have concluded the degree-course in Management and Organisational Sciences at Tuscia University or the Business Legal Expert first-level degree programme at Aquila University or the first-level degree programme in Security legal sciences at Rome Tor Vergata University (AlmaLaurea, 2020)

The pilot survey will be an online-survey. The consortium can provides the suggestions and recommendation of the questionnaire based on AlmaLaurea Interuniversity Consortium experience at Italian level. The Albanian partners will decide how and where host the data collection centrally in Albania.

II.2.4 Sample size, return rate

The precise sampling strategy will be determined by the consortium in close collaboration with the partners involved (taking the characteristics of the specific organization into account) to strive for a minimum number of respondents providing reliable outcomes for different gender, age, socioeconomic background and broad field of study groups.

II.2.5 Main split variables

Throughout this report, results will be presented in particularly along four main split variables with respect to the higher education programme graduated from:

- ✓ Employment rate
- ✓ Gender
- ✓ Master (MA-Level) versus Bachelor (BA-level)
- ✓ Field of study

With respect to field of study, to guarantee reliable and between the nine pilot universities comparable results, it is suggested to distinguish 5 broad fields of study:

- ✓ Education, Arts and Humanities
- ✓ Social Sciences and Journalism
- ✓ Business, Administration, Law and Services
- ✓ Natural Sciences (including Mathematics) and Health
- ✓ Technology and Engineering

Appendix 2.1 of this chapter shows the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-F) narrow study programmes clustered in these five broad fields of study.

Appendix 2.1: Fields of study - Clustering

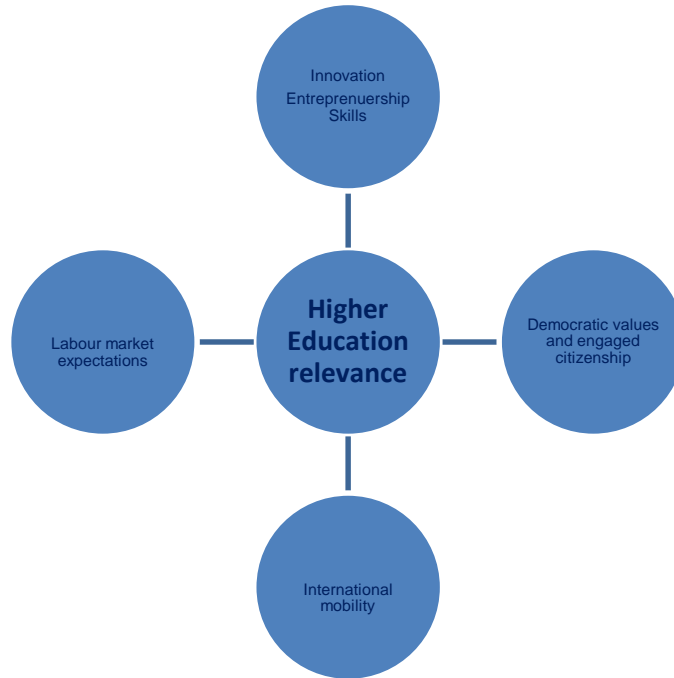
Education, arts and humanities	Social sciences and journalism	Business, administration, law and services	Natural sciences (incl. mathematics) and health	Technology and engineering
Literacy and numeracy	Social and behavioural sciences	Business and administration	Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics (not specified)	Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)
Education	Journalism and information	Law	Biological and related sciences	Interdisciplinary programmes and qualifications involving Information and Communication
Interdisciplinary programmes and qualifications involving Education	Interdisciplinary programmes and qualifications involving Social sciences, journalism	Interdisciplinary programmes and qualifications involving Business, administration	Environment	Engineering, manufacturing and construction (not specified)
Arts		Services (not specified)	Physical sciences	Engineering and engineering trades
Humanities		Personal services	Mathematics and statistics	Manufacturing and processing
Languages		Hygiene and occupational health services	Interdisciplinary programmes and qualifications involving Natural sciences, math	Architecture and construction
Interdisciplinary programmes and qualifications involving Arts and humanities		Security services	Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics (other)	Interdisciplinary programmes and qualifications involving Engineering, manufacturing
Arts and humanities (other)		Transport services	Agriculture	
		Interdisciplinary programmes and qualifications involving Services	Forestry	
			Fisheries	
			Veterinary	
			Interdisciplinary programmes and qualifications involving Agriculture, forestry,	
			Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary (other)	
			Health	
			Welfare	
			Interdisciplinary programmes and qualifications involving Health and welfare	

II.3 Expected features of Albanian higher education in a comparative perspective

In this paragraph, the basic expected features of Albanian higher education are introduced. At international level, the higher education institutions are expected to equip graduates with necessary skills and competencies to successfully enter a labour market and to maintain their employability. Higher education graduates are expected to provide a positive and fast impulse on the economies and societies by approaching creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship. Higher education should also promote engaged citizenship and democratic values (tolerance, openness and critical thinking). Higher education is more and more being called on to increase its transparency as well, in order to enhance young adults' ability to make effective educational choices as well as the promotion of international mobility. Albanian higher education sector increased significantly in terms of its international mobility during the last years. Mobility aims at adding to intercultural understanding, but also to expand competencies and better jobs of graduates.

It is suggested, in order to enhance the individual as well as societal relevance of higher education, to consider four main dimensions. At European level for example, the crucial goals of the political agenda as formulated by European policy makers at national and European level are represented by:

- i. Innovation, entrepreneurship and adequate skills (creative and entrepreneurial skills, professional expertise, transversal skills, etc);
- ii. Labour market expectations (successful transition to the labour market, adequate employment, wellbeing, career development, etc.),
- iii. International mobility during and after studies;
- iv. Democratic values and engaged citizenship (critical thinking, tolerance, attitudes towards democracy, political participation, civic engagement, etc.).



These dimensions reflect crucial paths in which higher education contributes to better economies and societies. They are interconnected, in the sense that they can mutually reinforce each other and not only: can also compete with each other. For example, critical thinking contributes to innovation and creativity; could represent as well a key pillar of democratic values and engaged citizenship, as well as an important input to increase employability. During the last years, due to globalization and advancement in communication and transports, international mobility is often perceived as improving the allocation of skilled labour, increasing individual labour market opportunities, enhancing intercultural knowledge and tolerance, and promoting the spread of innovations and creativity.

Throughout the Graduates Employment status report, the different dimensions of higher education will be discussed in separate chapters in detail. In a first step, a summary of these different dimensions is provided by addressing the extent to which higher education graduates, in the nine pilot universities, report that their study programmes provided them with a good basis for labour market.

II.4 Conclusions

In all countries, to the Higher education sector is given the task to prepare students for life. This task is connected to different dimensions, such as a good entrance on the labour market, long-term graduates employability, handling skills (required in an international context and dynamic labour market), as well as to promote engaged citizenship and democratic values. The basis provided for further learning is crucial, as graduates throughout their employment path and experience will be confronted with challenges requiring new skills or with changes in the labour market making their previously acquired skills obsolete. An additional aspect that should be considered is represented by the basis provided by the higher education study programme to acquire managerial, entrepreneurial and/or leadership skills. Entrepreneurs are seen as the backbone of the current and future labour market. Entrepreneurial skills are not only relevant for entrepreneurs but also for those employed by companies to look beyond the traditional boundaries of their job and to provide creative solutions. In this sense, it is of crucial importance for the higher education system to look into approaches that stimulate the basis provided to students with respect to entrepreneurial skills. To what extent this is related and the assessment of academic experience, the GRADUA questionnaire developed under the Erasmus+ Project implemented in Albania with 9 pilot universities, can represent an important baseline for further studies.

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