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POLICY BRIEF

**The assessment of the
European Studies programmes
according to the competences
acquired by students**

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THE ASSESSMENT OF THE EUROPEAN STUDIES PROGRAMMES ACCORDING TO THE COMPETENCES ACQUIRED BY STUDENTS



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Among all the factors of production, labor occupies the most important place. For both individuals and society, lack of employment is an impediment to economic growth and development. While unemployment was not a problem in the past, it was only after the Great Depression of 1929-1933 that it began to receive increasing attention from policy-makers.

Obtaining a job has a two-fold significance, firstly a job provides financial security to meet one's needs, and secondly a job is a contribution to the economic growth of the state concerned, hence higher unemployment implies lower economic growth. The outbreak of the Crisis of the Covid-19, produced mass layoffs, resulting in an unemployment rate in the European Union of (8.5%) and a youth unemployment rate exceeding (20%).



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Today, according to Eurostat and Trading Economics, in August 2023, unemployment in the European Union stands at (5.9%), while youth unemployment (under 25) is more than double (14%). The countries with the highest unemployment rate are Greece where youth unemployment is (23.2%), and Spain where youth unemployment is reported to be (27%) - the highest. In contrast, the country with the lowest unemployment rate is Germany (5.6%), but

in most EU countries the youth unemployment rate exceeds (10%). In Romania, with one of the biggest differences between the unemployment rate of (5.4%) and the youth unemployment rate of (22.3%), it is obvious that young people have major difficulties in finding a job.

Therefore, the situation of young people on the labour market is a serious concern and a challenge for the European Union. In a world that develops in rapid strides over very short periods of time, employer requirements change periodically in line with the development of society as a whole. Periods of economic development have existed in history, but the transition from one industrial revolution to another was gradual, with a transitional period in between.

Today, when most scholars already agree that we are in the fourth industrial revolution, the transition period is missing, the world is suddenly moving into a new phase. A report by the McKinsey Global Institute (Charting the path to the next normal, 2020), claims that by 2030, between 75 million and 375 million workers (representing 3%-14% of the total workforce) will have to change their current jobs. Also, 85% of the jobs that workers will be doing in 2030 have not yet been invented. Therefore, if the only constant remains transformation, the academic, educational and professional environment, and not least young people, are also called upon to adapt to the ever-increasing trends and demands of the labour market.

First and foremost, young people should discover and develop their own skills, and also pursue the development of professional competences in several fields. Interdisciplinarity and flexibility in moving from one field to another are the main characteristics of this era and also the solution that can facilitate the integration of young people into the labour market. Numerous studies show that people with more developed skills/competences can find a job much more easily. There is also evidence of greater mobility among workers with more developed skills, so that they can migrate wherever they find a job they like. There is also an interdependence between the free movement of people and people with higher skills. Thus, the more skilled people are, the greater the labour mobility (Hasselbalch 2019). Even knowing a foreign language significantly increases the chances of being able to find a job more easily.

The level of education and training is an important factor in finding a job on the labour market. The higher the level of education, the lower the youth

unemployment rate, according to the Audit Compendium (Youth unemployment and labour market integration - 2018). Therefore, education is also the solution to this problem. When talking about the educational process and preparing young people for the labour market, universities with their degree programmes are the main actors. The role of universities in society is well known and cannot be disputed. However, obtaining a bachelor's degree is no longer sufficient and secure for getting a job. Universities need to adapt to the current socio-economic climate and go beyond their traditional functions.

For example, in addition to the classic courses that are taught, universities could include in their programmes various academic projects on how young people can acquire more skills that can facilitate integration and access to the labour market. People need access to quality teaching and learning delivered in a variety of ways and conditions to develop their personal, social, cultural and professional knowledge, skills and competences. Education and training systems have been called upon to become more flexible and find solutions to provide more learner-centred, accessible and inclusive learning for a wider range of profiles. All proposed activities should aim to be interdisciplinary, offering learners a variety of courses. Even non-formal education and training providers are also addressing this need, offering new and innovative opportunities for further training and retraining. Learning opportunities should be based on "Lifelong Learning" and should be part of the long-term strategy of education and training institutions to improve their responsiveness to the rapidly changing needs of employers and learners. This would enable a more diverse group of young people to upgrade their skills and make retraining in other areas possible. (Yann-Mael Bideau, Thomas Kearns 2022).

The need for such programmes is both reflected in official EU reports and, above all, demanded by employers. One such programme is the project "[EURES - Widening Knowledge for a more Resilient Union](#)", implemented by the Centre for European Studies of the University "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" in Iasi. All the activities proposed in this project have an interdisciplinary character, bringing together students, academics, researchers, specialists and even the general public with different professional profiles. The idea of the project started precisely from the problem mentioned above, the youth unemployment rate. The main aim was to help young people to achieve/develop interdisciplinary skills to facilitate their integration into the labour market. In addition to the activities described above,

the project also carried out a survey in the form of an interview with employers, which aimed to highlight the importance of European Studies on the labour market.

As a result of this study, several issues stood out in particular. Firstly, employers consider that educational programmes in the field of European Studies are appropriate, but that their approach should be more pragmatic and technical. Secondly, employers consider it necessary to introduce new subjects related to European Studies, such as EU law or European policies, adapted to the labour market. Thirdly, employers point to the lack of a framework for communication between professional associations/clusters and universities, putting European Studies into practice and offering internship programmes to improve the employment prospects of European Studies graduates. Among the necessary skills that a young graduate should have are: flexibility, adaptability, teamwork, ability to synthesise, ability to identify a problem, digital skills, as well as communication skills with an increasingly diverse environment.

To summarise, the existence of programmes in European Studies, with the provision that these programmes will be consolidated, adapted and have a more pragmatic and technical approach, can have a positive influence on facilitating the integration of young people into the labour market. The existence of interdisciplinary projects with a European theme, run by universities/professional associations/firms, can also contribute significantly to the development of professional skills among young people and therefore influence the reduction of youth unemployment.

Bibliography:

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ABOUT

Jean Monnet Module on EU Interdisciplinary Studies:
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The reasons laying behind the project are related to the harsh economic challenges the EU is currently facing, the youth being mostly affected by very high unemployment rates. Thus, encouraging academic debates on how can young population acquire more competences and ease its labour market integration may be the key for reviving European economy (a more resilient EU).

All activities proposed in the project have an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary character: the events are aimed at specialists in various EU issues (regional development, health, European funding opportunities, methodological aspects); the target audience consists of students, teachers, researchers, broad public – having different profiles and professional backgrounds; the topics of the events organised (seminars, workshops, round tables) cover many perspectives: economic, social, political, medicine, engineering etc.

[EURES](#) project is coordinated by Ramona Tiganasu, researcher at Centre for European Studies

[The Centre for European Studies \(CES\)](#) is an interdisciplinary department within the [Faculty of Law from Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași](#), Romania and operates as a Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence in European Studies, from 2009.

CES's mission is to contribute to the development of the European dimension of education, to promote research and consultancy, information, documentation in the area of European studies and to, directly and indirectly, support the process of economic and social development in the North-East region of Romania.