UETPNET- UNIVERSITY ENTERPRISE TRAINING PARTNERSHIP NETWORKING FOR UPGRADING SKILLS USING ONLINE TOOLS

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ABSTRACT

Even if today's labor market is directing towards a skill-based approach for employment, the usual way that Universities and enterprises are collaborating are through the use of qualification degrees. This can create problems since employers do not have information about what the degree stands for. The aim of the Erasmus multilateral project UETPNET which has started on October 2010 is to promote the skills-based approach through the use of an online "matching skills" tool which will be used by the enterprises to describe their job positions in terms of skills and the universities to describe in terms of skills their qualifications. The products will be developed on the basis of an initial study developed earlier in order to identify the exact needs of the target groups. The target groups are universities, enterprises, students/ graduates and their associations (together with the employment agencies in the longer term). The consortium of the project is made of 9 partners from 6 countries (Greece, Cyprus, Italy, Spain, United Kingdom, and Romania) and includes universities, SME associations, employers' associations, SMEs and UETPs

(University-Enterprise Training Partnerships). The envisaged impact is improved transparency of the skills of the university graduates, fact which will lead to the improvement of their employability chances as well as to the improvement of the possibilities of the enterprises to find appropriate staff. Furthermore, in this way the skills gaps between the skills offered by the universities and needed by the enterprises can be easily detected and corrective action could be taken.

Introduction

The provision of services to support the students that have completed their education in a university in order to find a job becomes increasingly important because of the economic crisis and the increasing difficulty of the students and graduates to find an employment. Many education institutions have recently established liaison offices in order to promote their collaboration with the enterprises. However, this collaboration is usually limited in a small number of enterprises and it is not based on a skills based approach [1]. These problems reduce the effectiveness of the liaison offices to find an employment for their graduates since, in many cases employers complain that they do not have reliable information about what a qualification degree stands for in practice.

This paper intends to present the aims and objectives of an EU-funded project which aspires to resolve the above mentioned problems through the development of innovative ICT tools that will enable universities and enterprises to implement a skills-based approach in the cooperation between them.. The project is called UETPNET-University Enterprise Training Partnership Networking for upgrading skills using online tools (510635-LLP-1-2010-1-GR-ERASMUS-ECUE) and is co-funded by the Lifelong Learning- Erasmus programme of the European Union. The initials UETP

stand for University Enterprise Training Partnership which were organizations founded under the programme COMETT in 1986

Main idea of the project

The main outcome of the project will be a õmatching skills online toolö that will õmatchö the skills offered by the universities with these needed by the enterprises. This tool will enable enterprises to publish therein the job / internship positions they offer with a complete description of the skills needed for these positions (knowledge, communication skills, project management skills etc.). The description of the skills will be realized on the basis of the ECVET (European Credit System for Vocational Education & Training) model which was developed by the European Commission. The universities will upload to the tool the list of skills of their graduates. Furthermore, the universitiesø students and graduates will provide the university with a list of their additional skills which are not offered by the educational institution (e.g. foreign language, ICT skills) but they have been obtained by other kinds of training (formal, non-formal or informal). The tool will filter the skills needed by the enterprise with these offered by the universities (together with the additional skills) and will present to the graduates the job positions that match their profile and to the enterprises the most suitable graduates for their job positions. Furthermore, this tool can be also used to promote internship positions that may exist within enterprises. The design of the tool will be based on extensive research which includes needs analysis survey from universities, enterprises and students.

This process will be supported also by an E-Learning platform which will be used for the organization of seminars for enterprises prepared by university teachers as well as joint training sessions organized in common by Universities and enterprises. The E-Learning platform will be used also in order to match the gap between the skills offered by the Universities and the skills needed by the enterprises. If a gap is discovered, the Universities can offer brief online seminars to the students in order to bridge the gap. Finally, a web tool is going to be developed where there will be published joint initiatives by Universities and enterprises (conferences, seminars, researches, programmes, projects etc.), events/ activities organized by enterprises

which are of interest for the Universities and vice versa. As it was mentioned earlier, these tools could be used also by non university educational institutions.

Impact

The main impact of the project will be the improvement of the employability of the university graduates and the facilitation of the recruitment process for the enterprises. The enterprises, having in their disposal a tool which will describe the skills offered by the universities in a transparent way, will be able to find more easily qualified workers who are suitable to fill their job positions. In this way the skills based approach will be promoted both in the description of the university qualifications and in the description of the job positions of the enterprises. This tool will also allow the universities to identify on time possible gaps between the skills offered and those needed by the market.

Partnership

The consortium of the project is made of 9 partners from 6 countries (Greece, Cyprus, Italy, Spain, United Kingdom, Romania). 4 of the partners are universities, 1 is an SME association, 1 an employers' association, 1 SME and 2 University-Enterprise Training Partnerships, a special type of organization which was promoted by the European Commission in the 1980s in order to promote the collaboration and linkages between universities and enterprises.

Conclusion

The project UETPNET is currently in its 1st year of development. It is an ambitious project which aims to exploit the advantages given by the online tools in order to promote a more widespread and efficient way of student counselling and guidance. This efficiency is achieved through the reduction of the limitations of time and space

which is offered by the new technologies. More information about the project can be found in the website www.uetpnet.eu

References

[1] Tuning, Educational Structures in Europe, 2007, http://tuning.unideusto.org/tuningeu/images/stories/template/General_Brochure_final_version.pdf