



**The EUROCADRES link  
between students and professional life**

This paper summarises the common principles of the StartPro platform. It is based on the results of the seminar which took place in Brussels between 8 – 10 June 2005. It first states the common objectives of the platform and how it works. We then look at the three main topics of the platform: student life and higher education, the transitional period between studies and job, and first employment. In each section we first state the political objectives, then propose activities for the member organisations and end by presenting the possible activities of the StartPro platform.

### **Objectives:**

This platform has been established to support the EUROCADRES member organisations to:

- Improve the links between higher education, the labour market and the wider society.
- Create more awareness among trade unions for the situation of students and graduates on the labour market and in their first employment.
- Establish links with other stakeholders (e.g. universities, public employment services) and society as a whole.
- Familiarise students with trade union work
- Work to reduce the period between graduation and first employment
- Improve the working conditions in graduates' first (and following) employment
- Improve the knowledge of graduates concerning their rights on the labour market and in employment
- Work to create more and better jobs for graduates
- Improve the knowledge of employers about graduates' qualifications

### **Functioning and activities:**

The platform, at the moment, consists of colleagues of EUROCADRES member organisations who work with student / transition-to-work / first employment issues. Depending on the topic and the further development of the platform, it will be possible to open it to more participants, e.g. students and graduates themselves.

The discussions will be facilitated via e-mail, the data, texts and papers will be available on the EUROCADRES website. The platform will propose projects on important topics and organise meetings and seminars on a regular basis and disseminate the results.

The platform, under the umbrella of EUROCADRES, will:

- Exchange national and sectoral experiences, data and research on the student-to-professional-life period
- Discuss new developments in this area
- Support EUROCADRES in the improvement, lobbying and strategic planning of this area.
- Concentrate on specific issues connected to this topic (e.g. internships, mentorships etc.) to develop common ideas and projects
- Help develop European strategies and activities

## **Student life and higher education**

### **Objectives:**

- Higher education must be open for everyone indiscriminately of their gender, health, social or ethnic origins, sexual orientation, religion etc.
- To assure the quality of higher education especially when it comes to content and methodology, scientific level, multi-disciplinary approach, personal development, critical thinking, transversal competences, preparing students for changes and lifelong learning.

- Higher education must be general, open, multi-purposed and transversal; and teach fundamental knowledge and be relevant to society in general.
- Information and knowledge about the labour market and its developments, about rights and industrial relations should be part of higher education.
- To make students aware of the skills and competences they need and have.
- In addition to their curriculum, students need to learn specific skills for the labour market (CV writing etc.) and have other contacts such as student jobs, internships, mentors etc. in order to develop their employability.

### **Possible Trade Union Activities:**

In order to achieve these objectives, P & MS trade unions can take different actions:

- Provide the links to the labour market
- Represent the interests of students
- Use political influence on various levels
- Provide services related to the labour market

Trade unions can either themselves provide the following services or work with other stakeholders to ensure that students have access to them:

Career and vocational guidance; guidance for student jobs; Information on labour markets, trends, working conditions, salary developments, mobility, entrepreneurship ....; Where to find support and guidance; Internships; Mentors; company visits; CV-help, Practical training – work experience that are in line with legal requirements and offer acceptable salaries and some social protection.

On political levels, P & MS trade unions need to monitor the developments in the area of higher education and represent students' interest there. A good example is the Bologna process, where we should support the developments towards better transparency, increasing mobility and greater comparability of education; and preserve and promote the quality of the European multi-purpose higher education model.

Trade unions should try to become stakeholders in the higher education area and bring in their expertise and represent students' interests.

It is in the interest of all P & MS trade unions to establish links with students as early as possible. Unions need to take students' concerns into account and have a more open attitude towards universities.

### **What StartPro can do:**

- Exchange good practice for services provided to students
- Disseminate information about developments in the higher education area, especially the Bologna process
- Help develop policies on European level, based on the experiences in the member states and organisations
- Collect and publish data on the connection between higher education and the labour market
- Provide information and good practice on recruiting students and representing their interests

### **Transition-to-work period**

#### **Objectives:**

- To promote
  - a sufficient number of jobs that correspond to the skills and interests of graduates
  - better information and data about graduate (un-)employment

- equal access to jobs for young women and men and for graduates from immigrant families and ethnic minorities
- A closer analysis of labour market and occupational developments for graduates.
- Better age management in all sectors – public and private - and companies in order to offer young graduates an entrance into the labour market (mentoring programmes etc.)
- possibilities for training during unemployment periods - Lifelong learning opportunities
- Ways and means for trade unions to get in touch with young unemployed graduates and the other way round.
- more investment in research and development
- Opportunities for high qualified and better paid jobs (and their financing) in the service sector.
- the monitoring of skills needed for occupations and their developments
- To work to reduce the unemployment period for young graduates
- To contribute to the upgrading of skills and experience of graduates collected in summer jobs, 'McJobs', volunteer work etc.
- To initiate and/or participate in strategic discussions and activities on various levels (European, national, local) on how to increase graduate employment, including a more detailed analysis of necessary skills (too low, too high, development of certain professions...)

#### **Possible Trade Union Activities:**

Co-operations are necessary to tackle this problem. One area is to make the governments see the problem and start joint projects targeting graduate unemployment. Another area is to market the benefits of hiring graduates with a good academic knowledge.

Cooperation between unions and employers should be improved. Unions and employers have a common interest in securing growth and employment in Europe by developing the companies that are not today knowledge bases. Unions can try to use the growth and knowledge society agenda to facilitate networks and concrete projects with employers.

It is also of great interest to market the trade unions among unemployed graduates and present attractive services for people to become members.

Services provided for graduates can be help with CVs, maintaining contacts to mentors, pushing for work experience, simulated job interviews and much more. The union offering needs to be targeted at their current problems and needs to be attractive. Examples of services to offer are career guidance, mentorship, salary advice and contacts with employers and companies.

Entrepreneurship should be a real option in addition to looking for contracts. Nevertheless, trade unions need to monitor the developments in this area to be able to combat 'false' or pseudo-free-lance and independent contracts which free companies from social security obligations but do not offer more freedom to the individual than a regular employment contract.

We need a broader platform on national and regional levels which consist of social partners, universities, labour market experts, governments, etc. to deal with the situation of the transitional period.

Trade unions should cooperate with other European initiatives and organisations such as CEDEFOP, EURES, etc. in order to strengthen the European area and increase mobility by promoting the Europass, the European CV, a European mobility system, clear and recognised descriptions of diplomas and more efforts on language skills.

Every student should have a significant professional experience during his/her studies (through internships or apprenticeships). But to be useful for students these periods of internships must be carefully prepared and supported by the educational institutions and the

organization that employs trainees. This underlines the leading role that a professional mentor can play to support the trainee during his/her internship. The "skills" lacking after graduation are basically good contacts to possible employers and working experience.

### **What StartPro can do:**

- Work on common principles for internships.
- Present a project on internships to analyse the situation further
- Exchange good practice for initiatives for the transition-to-work period.
- Lobby the development of better and comparable data concerning graduate (un-)employment
- Encourage its members to negotiate graduate employment (job developments, access to learning, etc.) with employers
- Encourage its members to start initiatives for unemployed graduates
- Combat discrimination of young women and men and ethnic minority graduates together with its member organisations
- Aim at facilitating the development of new methods for cooperating with employer confederations and disseminating best practice
- The knowledge generated in StartPro can be used as a lever to inform employers about the potential connected to recruiting graduates and interns
- Cooperate with European initiatives such as CEDEFOP, EURES etc. to improve the situation of graduates

### **First employment**

#### **Objectives:**

- Promote the collection and dissemination of more information and comparable data about the working situation and working conditions of young graduates
- Monitoring of freelance and fixed-term contracts so that they don't become dead-end streets
- Better information for young employees concerning their rights
- Negotiations with employers about working conditions and career development of graduates as well as 'generational management' within companies
- Better information about job opportunities and working conditions in other countries
- Provide more information about salaries and working conditions, especially concerning young women
- Promote networks in order to facilitate personal and career development
- Establish and/or continue mentorships for graduate employees
- Work to secure access to training and further education
- Promote an ongoing discussion in trade unions about changes and new developments in order to be inclusive

#### **Possible Trade Union Activities:**

This is a crucial time for trade unions to make contacts with new employees, especially if there are no student organisations. At this time, the need for information and support is very high, and trade unions can help. A specific initiative for first time employment (ombudsmen, department) would be beneficial.

Local union representatives within companies have a responsibility to inform new employees. Especially people who are new on the labour market need to be guided and a program for this should be made available by the unions.

Trade unions can provide information for young employees concerning their rights, negotiate with employers about working conditions and career development of graduates as well as 'generational management' within companies, provide better information about job

opportunities and working conditions in other countries and more information about salaries and working conditions, promote and establish networks and mentorships in order to facilitate personal and career development for graduate employees.

Trade unions need to adapt their services and offerings to individual needs. Trade unions need to tune into today's and tomorrow's needs. This leads to some crucial question: how do we deal with the question between individualistic needs and services and collective action? Can we convince graduates (and other employees) that collective action is still viable and necessary? What does solidarity mean in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? These questions need to be discussed by P&MS trade unions in order to keep up with times and attract new members.

Trade unions need to tune into today's and tomorrow's needs.

To be able to change today's situation with a member stock far beyond low or middle average age, the younger generation and students need to be involved in the process and in decision-making at all levels. Trade unions need to be diversified in age and experience level to reflect and adapt to the current situation.

Trade unions can promote mobility both within countries, Europe and internationally. Trade unions need to keep the broader perspective and look differently at globalisation and internationalisation.

**What StartPro can do:**

- Encourage its members to set more initiatives for people in their first employment
- Encourage its members to recruit more employees in their first job
- Encourage its members to start discussions of internationalisation, new developments, trade union responses to change, inclusiveness
- Lobby for better and comparable data and information concerning working conditions, salaries and job situations
- Cooperate with mobilnet in order to provide more information about working abroad
- Cooperate with FEMANET to monitor the situation of women in their first employment and support them.
- Help set up (international) networks for exchange, career and personal development
- Exchange good practice of initiatives