

ARE UNIVERSITIES EQUIPPING US FOR A CHANGING WORLD?

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Editorial



Natalie Marsh
England



Slobodan Maricic
Serbia

In case you haven't noticed, the world is not in good shape right now. You noticed. Of course you did. The question is how you reacted. Did you just change the channel and turn your head away to gaze at sunshine and rainbows? Or did you use your head and try to change something? And by that we don't mean your haircut. There are a lot of nice haircuts in the world, but on what kind of heads? Educated ones?

Some universities have changed their addresses, and it seems a lot more of them are going to follow. They have moved right into your house, your room, on one of the several monitors that you probably own. You can read more about e-education in the following pages.

As the number of female graduates increases and overtakes males in the statistics, we look at whether this is the same in the workplace, with a focus on the issue of the gender gap. The story about this is waiting for you on page 4.

Moving towards a more unified European Union is something that is reflected in its education system. But with the Bologna process having been implemented for 15 years now, on page 10, we look at why some people are still suspicious of its success.

Improve knowledge every day and change the world. Because education is at the crossroads.

Best wishes,

*Natalie Marsh,
Slobodan Maricic*

Gender pay differences

Mind the Gap

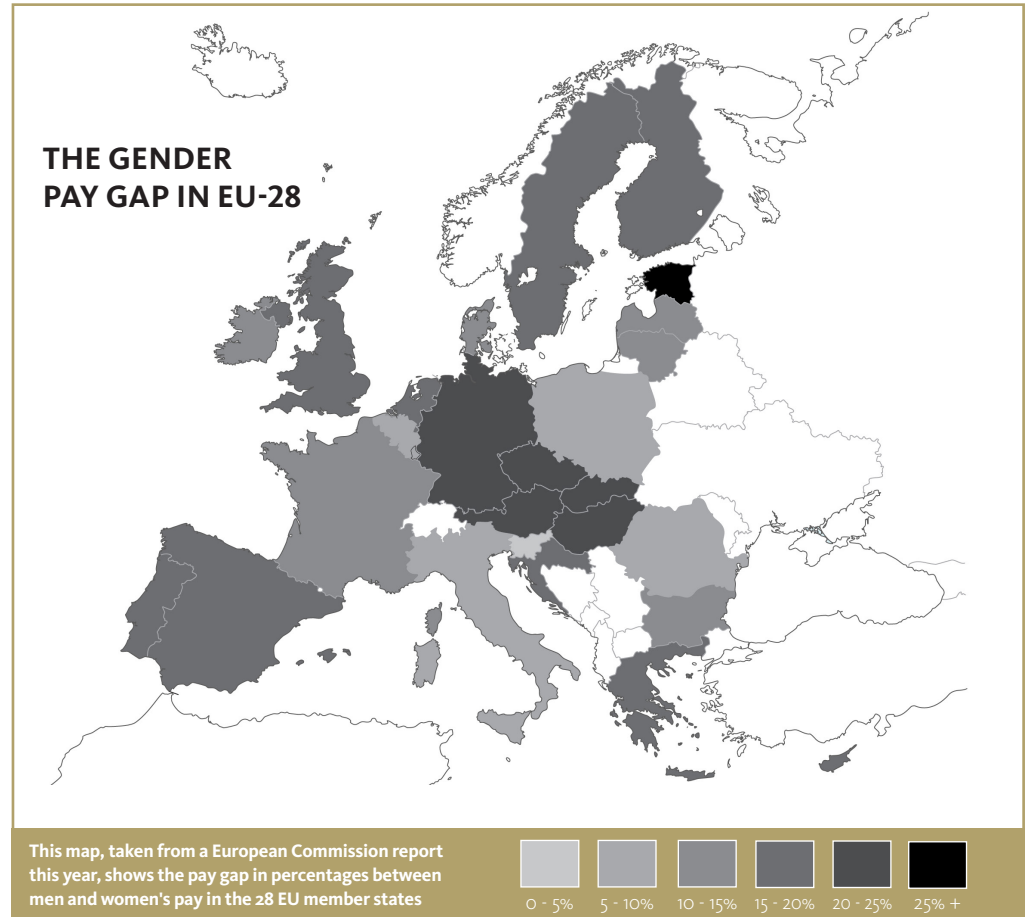
More women than men are now graduating from higher education, but there is still a gender pay gap in the workplace. Germany and Austria remain the nations in Europe with the largest difference in wages, but why is this the case?

Written by Natalie Marsh

Fourteen years into the 21st century, the narrative on women's rights has changed dramatically. For the first time, there are more women than men attending university. Despite this, there is still a divide in the workplace.

According to a report released by the European Commission in February, with the aim of tackling the gender pay gap across the continent, women are earning on average 16 percent less than men. However, Germany and Austria have the highest pay difference in Europe with a 20.8 percent and 19.2 percent difference respectively.

Birgit Sauer, a political science professor from the University of Vienna, says one reason for this is the country's traditional outlook. "Germany and Austria are labelled as very conservative welfare states," said Sauer, who specialises in gender studies. "Not only is the labour market hierarchal and segregated, but also state



provisions preserve this male breadwinner ideology."

Maternity leave also plays a big role. "It is women who quit jobs when there are children, and it is men who raise their working hours, and that's how this pay gap emerges," said Sauer. "At the beginning it's usually not that much; it is actually quite equal. But wages increase when people stay longer on the job, because when women drop out, they don't have these benefits, their pay is not rising and then over time, you have this huge gap."

A recent study by The Economist shows that female employees of Norway, Sweden and Denmark are given the lowest maternity pay in Europe, compared with Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia, which pay the best. "These countries have a more Catholic family-oriented tradition," said

Sauer. "They think that women should be at home with their children, so that's why they have long maternity leave. But the Nordic countries want to bring women, as well as men, back to work as soon as possible."

ELECTIVES VARY

It is also important to consider that not all areas of work are equally gender-balanced. "I guess there are more men than women in economics and business," said Sauer. "Also more females tend to take literature and history."

The European Commission has seen its fourth annual "Equal Pay Day" which raises awareness to the issue, and presses for further change. "You have laws already, like there should be equal payment and so on," said Sauer. "But it's really about implementing them." ■

**DIFFERENCES
START WHEN
WOMEN LEAVE
JOBS TO HAVE
CHILDREN**

ARTS DEGREES

Studies in something useful

University degrees have become a standard in modern society. But employability depends on the degree type, they say, and a degree in the arts is often deemed worthless.

Written by Gesbeen Mohammad

In the UK, experts warn that as many as half of graduates are left unemployed or in low-skilled jobs after finishing university with qualifications that fail to meet the needs of the modern economy. Forbes magazine has declared the arts as the 'worst college major'. Yet in 2011, over a tenth of students in the EU graduated with an arts or humanities degree. Some in industry call for students to complete more skilful and practical undergraduate degrees such as engineering and science.

But Andrea Braidt, Vice Rector for the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, believes society should take arts degrees even one step further to PhD level. "It is basically asking and answering questions by employing artistic methods," she says. "It's a question of methodology and epistemology." According to Braidt, there is a great demand for completing an arts degree in Austria.

Despite the interest in creative courses, critics argue some degrees pay for themselves, while others don't. A quarter of young people in the EU are unemployed – so, should students be investing in a degree that will put very little back into their pockets? These industries are extremely competitive even when they are booming. "Rather than asking why we are educating students to be jobless, we need to ask why there aren't jobs," says Braidt. So what can fed up art students do about family and friends ask-

► **Andrea Braidt, Vice Rector for the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, thinks arts degrees do contribute to society**



LUIZA PUJU

ing, "When are you going to get a real job?"

"They may not be Damien Hirsts but that applies to all professions," says Braidt. "It's the cliché of the jobless artist." Perhaps, it's just a question of social stigma arts degrees face.

Alexander Damianisch, Head of Support Art and Research at the University of Applied Arts, Vienna, has lectured German language in the UK, been an exhibition coordinator and science project officer in Austria amongst many other things. Damianisch believes there's plenty science can learn from the arts. "This questioning of actual truth is a very positive quality of artistic research," he says. "This critical curiosity shapes

something that is different to the scientific notion."

Nearly 60 years ago, a British physical chemist and novelist, CP Snow, warned of a divide between scientists and artsy intellectuals. Eric Schmidt, chairman of Google, says arts and sciences need to be brought together for the sake of innovation. After all, Apple is such a success because it was not the managers who were trying to create something new – but musicians, poets and artists (although they all were computer scientists too). But it is this combination that creates and takes society forward.

HIGHER THINKING

"Arts encourages one to be critical not necessarily in the socio-political way but in what's real," says Damianisch. "Go to the bottom line and go still beyond that – then go on to propose changes to society."

A career in the arts isn't the most straightforward of all choices. However, it has the capacity to evolve society. In the words of Braidt: "If you employ an artistic approach, you come up with answers and dimensions of problems that you maybe can't tackle with sciences. Or it may give you ways to tackle it differently. It's also a vice-versa thing." ■

Bizarre educational courses

■ **PARANORMAL ACTIVITY?** We all know it's fiction, but Parapsychology (MA) was launched at Coventry University, UK, in 2006. Expect ghosts.

■ **"THE PHALLUS"** course at the Occidental College in Los Angeles lets students have a naughty peek at everything from "the witness of the phallus" to the "lesbian phallus".

■ **HEY, COIN COLLECTORS,** the University of Vienna has a Masters degree in Numismatics and Monetary History.

ONLINE EDUCATION

Going “E” by degrees

A poor, artisan couple in a small village in Vojvodina region had a son and named him Dimitrije. From an early age he had a driving passion to study and read, but after the death of his father, his uncle pulled him out of school. He started to work in a quilt craft. But as soon as he got the chance, he ran away. That’s where his real education journey began.

Written by Slobodan Maricic

After spending some years in a monastery, where he changed his name to Dositej it was 1763 and he went to Greece to study the language, literature, theology, and philosophy. Eight years later he was in Vienna tutoring students and studying logic and metaphysics. During his whole life, which he dedicated to studying, he visited the whole Balkan region, Anatolia, Italy, Germany, France, England, Austria and Russia. He settled in Belgrade in 1807, four years before his death and shortly after he was appointed as Serbia’s first Minister of Education.

Students from the new millennium, who are hungry for knowledge like he was, don’t have to spend their entire life travelling all around the world to get their education. Average person gets more information in a day than someone who lived couple of centuries ago would get in a lifetime. Libraries are full of books waiting to be picked up from a dusty shelf. Dust? Shelf? Paper? Smelly old books? For some that sounds outdated. Luckily, just for some. But the fact is that mostly everything “hungry” students ever wanted is just one click away. And yet, the internet is usually consumed for cat and baby videos.

Sir John Daniel, former Head of Education, UNESCO, says that when using the Internet for learning you

have to get better at searching to find what you want.

“There’s a lot of tools to find what you want,” he says. “I’ve been very involved in these things, called open educational resources, which are free. They do not lead to credits and qualifications but if I’m a student who is having difficulty with my homework,

FLEXIBILITY OF E-LEARNING VALUABLE FOR EVERYONE

I may well be able to find on the web something that does it much better, and that’s fine. I think that’s super, but what you need is a very easy way of finding it.”

MOVING TO THE WEB

Next to “the usual way” of using the internet for studying, there is e-learning, which is the use of electronic media, educational technology, and information and communication technologies in education, according to the definition. A massive open online course (MOOC) is aimed at unlimited participation and open access via the web to videos and readings. Two professors from Stanford made the first free online course in 2011 when 350,000 people from all around the

world applied. A year later, this phenomenon came to Europe, when the first MOOC seminar was held.

Hannes Klöpfer, Managing Director of *iversity.org*, a platform that offers MOOCs thinks that by having an online platform at all sorts of universities, students will have freedom of choice not only to do whatever they want, but also how they want to specialise in specific disciplines. Online courses existed before, but not a la carte, like nowadays.

THE BRIGHT SIDE

“Obviously, universities and your time are limited, so even if you are at a university that basically offers everything, you might not be able to get to all the classes at the same time. Higher flexibility of online learning will be valuable for everyone, no matter at which institution they are at”, says Mr Klöpfer. “Also, e-learning really helps to advance good teachers and by that, I don’t mean star professors with Nobel prizes, but good teachers from all institutions. Some good teachers who work at some small colleges might be much better at explaining things than a researcher-star professor.”

Benefits also include reduced travel time and cost, self-paced learning models, and an easy approach to sources important for their topics. Klöpfer emphasises the technological point: more people who are involved



in creating the course and the importance of better feedback.

ON THE OTHER HAND

But there are also some disadvantages. Learners with low motivation or bad study habits may fall behind, get lost or confused and some fields cannot be studied online – lab work is difficult to simulate in a virtual classroom. Students also must have computer knowledge, and a computer, which by the way, is not a usual thing in some parts of the world.

“There is a huge diversity of participants. The problem exists, of course, when you cannot hold a seminar discussion with 10,000 people,” says Klöpfer. “But there are a lot of things that you can do online that you can’t do anywhere else in the world. People now usually have iPhones, everyone can take a photo from their location about some subject and upload them somewhere where all participants can interact.”

Sir John Daniel says online courses are not revolutionary in higher education, no matter what people say as long as they don’t lead to higher education qualifications.

“I’m strongly in favour of online education,” he says. “I spent most of my life in that business. What I’m against is people telling me these are the solutions to everything, because you don’t get recognition. It’s interesting if you want to know about dino-

▲ Hannes Klöpfer discussing e-learning with the Forum participants at the “World Cafe”

sours, you can watch lots of TV programmes about it but, at the end of it, you can’t say you have any knowledge or expertise about dinosaurs.”

No matter who wins in this pros-and-cons battle, the need for e-learning still exists. Young people have more in common with someone of their own age from across the world, than with “old” people. They also want the same education. Ivy League colleges cannot accept all students who apply to studying there. They cannot all get in. For example, in South Asia, only two percent of that top one percent allowed to take state entrance exams to get to technical universities in India, make it to those universities.

The current condition of e-learning in the world is rapidly expanding, Klöpfer says. “It’s only two years since

more interconnected world now sees the value of having this global forum for education”.

CREDENTIAL ISSUES

Statistics show that the increase in average life expectancy is linked to the growth of number of people in higher education on a global level. Soon there will be billions of doctoral degrees hanging proudly on family walls. E-learning will definitely have some part in it. If the values are clear, people will find a way to find what they are interested in, Klöpfer concludes.

“I don’t believe that online education will fully replace universities,” he says. “The most important thing is to link up this informal way of learning with existing frameworks of formal learning and existing credentials,” Klöpfer adds. That, he thinks, is why we are struggling to offer more online courses for certificates: “If students can get values of the course in the real world then the message about it will spread. There are also ways to motivate students. For example, for every finished chapter, the student gets a point. Each point is a lottery ticket. The prizes are a MacBook, a 3,500 euro scholarship for three months, and a plane ticket to anywhere in the world. With all that, you can go to some beach anywhere in the world and study there.” ■

**“I DON'T BELIEVE
E-EDUCATION WILL
REPLACE UNIVERSITIES”**

institutions, and especially leadership institutions, began to grasp the potential of this way of learning. Technology has also more recently come to the point where it’s cheap and easy enough. Don’t forget, YouTube wasn’t here around ten years ago. There were no online streaming videos. The



HIGHLY EDUCATIONAL

The Ukrainian revolution started from a small protest of nearly 100 students and Molotov cocktails played an important role. At Alpbach Maidan, scholarship holders from Ukraine conveyed the insights of the revolution to an international audience



LOST IN TRANSLATION

Alpbach translators at work, Marianne Schögl and Karlheinz Spitzl, without whom the Forum would fall apart



SAY CHEESE

Smiles at the camera during "World Café" at Hauptschule where participants were able to present topic ideas for discussion

LUÍZA PUIU

LUÍZA PUIU

THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

Two sides to the story

Europe's universal education system celebrated 15 years since its inception this year. But as we look at the changes it has made to universities across the continent, it is still widely criticised.

Written by Natalie Marsh and Maialen Torres

In June 1999, the Bologna process was introduced into the higher education programmes of 29 European countries. Today, as that number has risen to 47, the process still provokes scepticism. "I think it's been a complete pretence," said Sir John Daniel, the Former Head of Education at UNESCO. "The main idea is to get programmes that would lead people into employment fairly directly, and that has just not happened." Another criticism of the process comes from the structure on which these degree programmes are modelled. For example, due to the length of some degrees being cut down, it is sometimes necessary for students to take a master's degree in order to get the same amount of knowledge they would have previously absorbed.

A PERSONAL APPROACH

Father Friedrich Bechina, who is a member of the board for the Bologna follow-up group and the secretary for the congregation of Catholic education, sees the Bologna process in a different light, and says that an individual focus is important. "I would very strongly advocate for a more personalised approach," he said. "The question is also how society can benefit from the development of the single

► Education expert, Sir John Daniel, says the Bologna process' plan to help employment isn't working



person, and then create a possibility for the individual. At least we should work in this direction. If we know what society wants tomorrow, then we can define what kind of universities we need today."

FINDING BALANCE

Due to the gradual standardisation of this institution across the continent, the Bologna process will make moves to different countries possible without obstacles that may have once stood in the way. However, as students are faced with a heavier workload and credits that are awarded based on attendance and homework hours, many are facing difficulties with balancing their responsibilities. "It

doesn't help to bring somebody into higher education who cannot take the benefit of it if he or she is not qualified," said Bechina. "It should be accessible for anyone who is qualified." But as this high demand of work is preventing some people who need a part-time job from getting one, Sir John Daniel believes this makes the system inaccessible. "It's a phoney access in my view," he said. "It seems to be very important to have a reasonable provision of part-time opportunities."

So can we solve this? "I think the steady implementation of the reform they were meant to do will help," said Daniel. "But at the end of the day, if nothing else gets you, economics will." ■

**EDUCATION:
ACCESSIBLE
FOR ANYONE
WHO IS
QUALIFIED**



PHILIPP NADERER

CHANGING THE INTERNSHIP GAME

One step beyond work placement

Experience in the workplace is something that employers value highly among new graduates. But what about combining a bachelor's degree with a fixed placement at a partner company?

Written by Natalie Marsh

"Imagine you are 18, and this offer faces you: you get a degree, you get a job, you get paid, you get the work experience, and you get it within six semesters." This is Stefan Fitz-Rankl's vision of a degree programme to be implemented in Austria in September. "It's about combining the education for

our students, and part of it is with a company," he said. "It's not just the university being responsible for the education part, the assignments they will have in their companies are linked to the degree programmes." Fitz-Rankl, who is the general manager at the Vorarlberg University of

▲ **Stefan Fitz-Rankl** talks to Natalie about his plan to combine education with work placements

Applied Sciences in Dornbirn, Austria, thinks that this degree programme will catch on.

However, partnership on this large scale doesn't come without obstacles. "It's very challenging," said Fitz-Rankl. "I'm not expecting that all universities have the capacity to implement such a programme, but for certain specific niches, especially when it comes to technical degree programmes, I see that there is an increasing demand."

WORKING TOGETHER

Practical experience in a chosen field of study has always been highly regarded by employers. While a work placement is compulsory for many degree programmes across Europe, Fitz-Rankl believes that this approach is different. "What is being done at the partner company is closely monitored," he said. "It's more than a work placement because the companies and the universities work together and are partners." ■


WE RELAYED THIS IDEA TO STUDENTS AT THE FORUM. HERE ARE THEIR RESPONSES:

I think it's a great idea because we really have a lack of practical experience from studying from university




ZORIANA SEMEHEN
Graduate from V. Stefanyk Precarpathian National University, Ukraine.

I would support this fully. I think that higher education needs a shake-up. And it would help social mobility, because people who might not be able to get a job would get paid




IVAYLO DIMITROV
University College Utrecht

I think it's a perfect idea. If you can get money and improve knowledge, that's great



OLEKSANDRA GRYP
Graduate from Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Ukraine.

Having experience to implement knowledge into practical things I think is very reasonable. This can be very good for the workforce market



YAROSLAV MELEKH
PhD student at Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Ukraine

PHOTO'S NATALIE MARSH

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