The Second International Conference will explore which critical factors determine university graduate's early career success and how higher education systems respond to the real world employment challenges.

The experts—prof. Ulrich Teichler (DE), prof. Robin Middlehurst (UK), prof. Wolfgang Mayrhofer (AT) and more than 20 others—will present and discuss application of empirical employability data on key higher education developments as well as challenges related to:

- Institutional higher education management
- Accreditation and reaccreditation of programmes
- Career centres
- Enhancement of theory with practical work

Registration is opened
Contact e-mail address: dehems@fdv.uni-lj.si
CONFERENCE PROGRAMME IS AVAILABLE AT PROJECT’S WEB PAGE: WWW.DEHEMS-PROJECT.EU. REGISTRATION FORM CAN BE COMPLETED AT THIS WEB PAGE.

This conference has no registration fee.
The number of participants is limited, so in the event of interest consider short online registration as soon as possible.

Venue: University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences - Ljubljana, Slovenia

Accommodation: For accommodation and tourist information please see also project’s webpage.

Abstracts of Vienna Conference Contributions — Part II

Conference contributions and presentations in Vienna were divided into seven different sections, each of them covering specific section of employability of graduates and higher education management system.

This volume of E-DEHEMS contains second part of abstracts covering the following themes:

- Demand for Professional Competences: Employers’ Perspectives
- Policy Development
- Permeability between Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training.

First part of conference contributions is available in E-DEHEMS No. 3 (see project’s webpage).
A View on New Skills for Better Employability
Neda Bokan, Dejana Lazić and Gordana Danilović (University of Belgrade, Serbia)

Employability of graduates depends on the development level of a country. But, recognition of new skills of graduates might also improve the progress of a country. We point out which skills are important for better employability and which stakeholders play a role in the achievement of some skills. Of course, the role of formal education to achieve some skills and competences is on the first place. Anyhow, more and more the role of career centers, incubators of technical faculties, IAESTE and others in this framework is also recognized. Some strategies, established on a state level and on a higher education institution level improve some creation of solution of employability problem in a right way.

Professional Paths of French Young PhD Earners: "Taste for Science" Faces Labor Market's Reality
Julien Calmand (Cereq, France)

In the knowledge society (Foray, 2009) young PhD graduates should have a major role in our economy. They play a central part in the dissemination of "scientific and technical human capital" in the the academic sector but also in the private sector. However, data in several countries shows that PhD graduates are facing growing difficulties in the labor market (Enders, 2002; Ma and Stephan, 2005, Bonnal and Giret, 2009). In France, more than 70 % of them wants to work in public research or academic sector when they enter in the labor market but only 40 % of them manage to find a job in this two sectors. Also when they don't find this kind of job, some of them are unemployed (10 %), in fact PhD earners have much more probability to be unemployed 3 years after graduation than graduates from engineering or business school or graduates from master degree. The aim of this article is to study PhD graduate's paths during their first 3 years in the labor market. We use the Generation surveys made by the Cereq (Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches sur les Qualifications). In terms of methodology, we will study paths of PhD graduates who wanted to work in academic sector at time of graduation. Our idea is to define a concept of "typical path" in order to obtain several representative and homogeneous. A multinomial model will give us "all things being equals" the impact of graduates' characteristics on their path.
Measurements and Potential Outcome Models for Estimating the Outcome Effect of Italian Universities Reform: Delay at Graduation, Income, Employment
Furio Camillo and Andrea Cammelli (University of Bologna, Italy)

The paper is aimed at providing a draft evaluation of the impact the reform, implemented in 1999 and better known as the “3+2 reform”, has had on the Italian university system. The graduates’ viewpoint has been adopted, with their characteristics and performances, in relation to both their course of study and placement in the labour market. More specifically, the main research question the paper intends to reply to is: how has the delay at graduation been changing because of the reform, given the characteristics of students, context and university?

Evidently, since the reform has structurally changed university studies, it actually defines now different “objects” than the old courses of study. In theory, since they are different, they cannot be compared in the changeover from the pre- to the post-reform system. Moreover, in order to reply to the question mentioned above, it is also possible to claim that the issues about measurement and treatment of delay at graduation (whether exogenous or endogenous) must be dealt with, provided that the reform intervened exactly by changing the definition and structure of the prescribed graduation time. It is furthermore necessary to keep in mind that the reform is not a past event which can be clearly defined over time, and yet, 13% of Italian graduates earned an “old system” qualification still in 2008.

The paper is divided into paragraphs and starts with the description of the database employed. Further on, through an entirely data-driven approach, the focus is on some measurement tests performed by means of micro-econometric models and other multi-varied tools so as to estimate the differential impact of the four different types of treatment, namely three-year degree courses (L), master’s degree courses (LS), single-cycle specialist degree courses (LSE) and old-system degree courses (CDL). Those tests were all checked by using individual-level covariates related to all graduates’ socio-demographic characteristics, their university and pre-university education career, along with environmental and geographical variables that can potentially impact on their labour market performance.

The present analysis was made possible thanks to the survey on graduates’ employment status the AlmaLaurea Interuniversity Consortium carries out on a yearly basis.
Promoting Leadership Skills in Higher Education
*Carmen Delia Davila Quintana, Jose-Gines Mora Ruiz and Luis E. Vila Lladosa*
*(University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain; Institute of Education, University of London; MC2 - University of Valencia)*

SCOPE AND PURPOSE The development of leadership skills by higher education graduates is thought to be influenced by their educational path along with their early work experiences.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA Structural equation models (SEM) are used to estimate the effects of higher education and earlier work experience on the development of professional competencies shaping graduates leadership skills on a sample of some 5,000 recent graduates from Spanish universities.

RESULTS The results show that individual’s leadership capacities depend on the development of specific professional skills. Competency development, in turn, emerges from university education and early career experiences. The characteristics of university education analyzed include programme followed, teaching and learning modes applied, and student effort and behavior.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS The analysis contributes to identify those teaching and learning modes with stronger marginal effects on the development of leadership skills during university education. The main implication is that the promotion of adequate learning environments at university may foster the development of leadership skills by graduates at the time of graduation, which in turn would improve the chances of further development of leadership competencies in earlier career stages.

UETPNET- University Enterprise Training Partnership Networking for Developing Skills Using Online Tools
*Konstantinos Diamantis Balaskas (Action Synergy S.A., Greece)*

The promotion of the collaboration between universities and enterprises is crucial for the increase of the employability of the university graduates. The project UETPNET-University Enterprise Training Partnership Networking for Upgrade Skills Using online tools is a project co-funded by Lifelong Learning- Erasmus programme aiming at the promotion of this collaboration through the development of online tools. The main outcome of the project will be an online "matching skills" tool that will be used by the Universities in order to publicize the skills of their graduates and by the enterprises in order to describe the skills needed for their job/ internship positions.
This tool will automatically “match” the skills offered by the universities and the skills needed by the enterprises in order to allow from the one hand the universities to increase the employability of their graduates and from the other hand the enterprises to find the most suitable candidates for their job/internship positions. In order to complement this process, together with this tool (the main outcome of the project), two other web tools (an e-learning platform and a collaborative tool for publication of joint activities) will be developed as supportive tools for this process. The target groups of the project 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).

The Place of Intellectual Capital in Supporting International Entrepreneurship among Young Graduates
Carolyn Downs (University of Salford, United Kingdom)

The paper is based on the early findings of the EU Erasmus-funded ELIE project and the potential for work-based learning within Higher Education to further support and develop entrepreneurship amongst young graduates. ELIE is an acronym for ‘Employability: Learning from International Entrepreneurship’ and the first stage of the project has involved interviewing people who have started a business as immigrants to a new country. A striking feature of the interviews has been that amongst younger interviewees intellectual capital has been a significant feature in the impetus for both mobility and entrepreneurship. Our innovative student workshops have further supported the development of knowledge on the place of intellectual capital in encouraging international entrepreneurship. This paper will consider how the entrepreneurial experiences of younger ELIE participants differ from older participants and will note significant policy and practice implications for educators. It will also consider how traditional work-based learning modules can be modified to encourage mobility and entrepreneurship during difficult economic times and will offer a model of WBL that builds on the findings of ELIE in relation to young graduates.

Overlapping of VET and HE - European Experience
Torsten Dunkel (Cedefop, Greece)

Promoting flexible pathways between vocational education and training (VET), general education (GE) and higher education (HE) is one of the strategic objectives of the Bruges Communiqué (2010). The Copenhagen process specifically calls for assuring open pathways and parity of esteem between vocational education and training, and general/higher education. The learning outcomes approach to define and describe qualifications – promoted by the Bologna as well as the Copenhagen processes – is questioning traditional distinctions between higher education and vocational education and training.
It might lead to overcome traditional dividing lines rooted in institutional boundaries, level assignments and qualification types (Cedefop/Dunkel et al., 2009). VET in Europe is characterised by the large variety of national VET systems, contexts and traditions. This is especially true for VET at higher qualification levels (EQF levels 6 to 8). This contribution seeks to identify offers across the boundaries of well established education and training sectors (VET and HE) and for overcoming their institutional divide. Taking into account academisation and vocationalism trends, it reviews the definitions in use and discusses current developments and understanding in policy and practice. The evidence gathered based on selected case studies supports a better understanding of VET at higher qualification levels in the context of related labour market needs, learning outcomes orientation and parity of esteem as well as cooperation models at tertiary level (Cedefop, forthcoming).

**Effects of Higher Education Program Characteristics on University Graduates’ Performance**

*Adela García-Aracil and Davinia Palomares-Montero (Ingenio (CSIC-UPV), Spain)*

The role of universities in the process of local and regional economic development has attracted considerable interest among scholars and policy makers. There is ample evidence confirming that the presence of skilled labor force contributes local economic development by fostering productivity effects via local knowledge spillovers and human capital externalities. In this context, educational programs are designed aiming at the preparation of the high qualified young population for fulfilling responsible roles in professional life in specific and in society in general. In this paper, the focus of the analysis is thereby on the efficiency by which the programs of the higher education systems in some European countries allocate their graduates over the various domains in the labor market and how these graduates perform in their jobs obtained. For that purpose, we use the REFLEX (Flexible Professional in the Knowledge Society) data set. Our preliminary results show that the generic versus discipline-specific competencies orientation of the educational program strongly influences the allocation graduates over different occupational domains. Moreover, educational programs with a strong relation between learning and direct working experience acquisition provide a better link to occupations inside their graduates’ discipline-specific domain.
School to Work Transitions in Europe: Speed of Convergence to Permanent Employment
(Christelle Garrouste, Joint Research Center of the European Commission – IPSC – Unit of Econometrics and Applied Statistics, Italy)

In a context of intensive and global economic competition, European countries are growingly concerned with the consequences of increasing numbers of young people temporarily or permanently prevented from entering the job market and the difficulties faced by college and university graduates to find adequate employment. This study is concerned with analyzing the speed of transition of students to permanent employment, as a proxy of professional stability, and by identifying possible discriminatory effects, in selected countries.

Among school leavers, who transits faster to permanent employment? Is the transition faster for highly skilled workers than for lower skilled workers? Is it faster for men than for women? Is it slower for young workers of non-native origins? Is it faster for participants to apprenticeship programmes?

The research questions are addressed with a continuous time Markov chain model where each individual can transit non-sequentially between the following Markov states: (1) education; (2) inactivity; (3) unemployment; (4) fixed-term/temporary employment; and (5) permanent employment, where the 5th state is a non-absorbing steady state. The model is tested using the longitudinal ECHP data in twelve EU member countries, over the period 1994-2001, controlling for individual and household characteristics, including, among other things, gender, education level and training, parents’ educational attainment, ethnic and immigration status, and predispositions (voluntary or involuntary) to remain in fixed-term employment. In addition, we also include some institutional controls, such as the employability rate of the 20 to 34 years-old and some variables characterizing the level of flexicurity of the countries.

(Laura Gressnerova and Ivan Prelovský, Institute of Engineering Studies, Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava, Slovakia)

High quality guidance and counselling services play a key role in supporting lifelong learning, career management and achievement of personal goals. The shift to lifelong guidance can best be supported through European cooperation and partnerships with higher educational institutions. In the context of lifelong education the career counselling represents a set of activities that allow to citizens of every age and in every stage of life to identify their possibilities, competencies and interests, to be able to decide about their education, vocational training and employment, and to master his personal career in education, work and other areas in which they adopt and/or use these capabilities.
In the frame of the Project ERASMUS, Multilateral projects "Development and Implementation of Common Bachelor’s Programme in the European Context", eight universities from EU (SK, CY, EE, ES, GE, HR, PL, UK) are developing common study programme with joint diploma/Diploma Supplement for career counsellors. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT - Harmonization of higher education and postgraduate education for career guidance in partner countries, by accepting comparable academic degrees, joint diploma / Diploma Supplement - Securing the transparency of existing national systems of career counsellors’ (CC) education, to improvement of recognitions of their qualifications, support of international mobility of students and graduates - Improvement of quality in provided higher education, its further internationalisation as well as employment of higher education graduates at domestic and international labour markets.

Aspects of Transition and Professional Success – Findings from Austrian Graduate Surveys
*Helmut Guggenberger, Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt, Austria*

1. There were three graduate surveys with members of the Klagenfurt Department of Sociology participating: CHEERS (1997-2000), REFLEX (2004-2007) and ARUFA (2009-2010). – I will point out some findings on transition and early professional success.

2. HE researchers critically observe the implementation of the Bologna process. Meanwhile there is some experience with its challenges, and some empirical evidence on its problems. The employability as a result of the new Bachelor degrees was a topic in ARUFA, as was student mobility.

3. In Austria at least two matters for public concern are evident: “poor” (or precarious) occupation and “unemployment” (i.e. no occupation) for university and Fachhochschule graduates. Graduate surveys contribute to a factual and data-based discussion about the vocational practicability of academic degrees.

4. Up to now there are only “ad hoc” graduate surveys in Austria. But obviously there is a need for periodical surveys, to support “national” Higher Education politics as well as to shape the European Higher Education Area. Politics, to be successful, are dependent on data, information and knowledge about their HE systems including actors and stakeholders, and above all – students and graduates.

5. Facing the growing importance of “new” degrees, there is no way back. But the Bologna Process still involves a series of challenges: We face a lot of heterogeneity – combinations of studying and working, types of degrees completed back-to-back … – and have to cope with this, in the organisational and the didactical respect.
HAI GUI: Job-Seeking Experiences of Sea Turtles upon to China
(Jie Hao and Anthony Welch, The University of Sydney, Australia)

Against the backdrop of the rapid increase in Chinese students undertaking higher education overseas, then returning home for career development, this article examines their job seeking experience in today’s China. It outlines the current employment situation for high-skilled international graduates, analyses their key advantages and disadvantages in China’s labour market in comparison with indigenous graduates, and examines the key re-integration issues. China’s labour market is already crowded, with an average 4.5 million local graduates every year in the past five years (at an average 0.6 million increase each year), and on-going reforms of Chinese higher education enhances their competitiveness in the labour market. Nonetheless, after some years of international education and living experiences abroad, many returning graduates experience re-integration problems due to their altered mentalities, and ways of working. Re-embracing the home culture, however, is an extremely important factor for their successful career development in China. This research provides efficient feedbacks to international higher education institutions as many of them recruit overseas-educated Chinese students, which contributes to the internationalization process within their institutions. The research also provides valuable information to current Chinese international students on how to negotiate the changing labour market in China.

General Competencies Important for Graduates and Employers in Hungary
(Paszkál Kiss, Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary)

A set of general competencies was assembled and asked on a national representative sample of employers and on a national representative sample of graduates in Hungary. The factor structure of these competencies was mapped and turned out to be similar to that of other European surveys conducted before. The answers of employers and graduates were analyzed to reveal the differences and agreements in these perspectives. Job satisfaction of young employees was also assessed in relation to the perceived competences needed for the job. In all, the use of general competences proved to be a good tool to assess important aspects of the transition from HE to a professional career.

The Analysis of the Implementation of the Bologna Process at University of Ljubljana
(Andrej Kohont, Samo Kropivnik and Monika Kalin Golob, University of Ljubljana,

The presentation focuses on the implementation of the Bologna process in the Slovene Higher education area. Authors are interested in the processes that contributed to the current performance of the renewed programs at the University of Ljubljana. They will present the preliminary research results.
The authors have collected, reviewed and analyzed the existing research on the implementation of the Bologna reform in Slovenia. In this text analyses they highlighted in particular: a.) a basic understanding of the Bologna Process at HE institutions, the methods of implementation, the instruments to identify learning requirements, the aims and orientations of the HE institutions in the programs renewal, b) the type, scale, range, availability of data that were gathered during the implementation process, and c) the possibility of secondary analysis. In the next step they have developed and used the questionnaires to get pro deans insights into the Bologna reform process. Around 60% of HE institutions at University of Ljubljana participated in this part of the research. In the last step they analyzed the reform process at Faculty of Social Sciences. The preliminary data show there is no national in-depth evaluation of the implementation process yet and that the implementation processes at HEI were quite diverse.

**International Experiences and Early Career Success of Recent Graduates**  
*Fabian Kratz, Bayerisches Staatsinstitut für Hochschul, Germany*

Hypothesis about the effect of international experiences on early career success of recent graduates are formulated, drawing on a combination of the microeconomic human capital model as well as the job-search-theory. The analysis is based on the Bavarian Graduate Study (Bayerisches Absolventen Panel, BAP), a representative data base for a wide array of fields of study at Bavarian universities and universities of applied sciences. Methods of multilevel modeling are employed to identify individual gains to international experiences during the course of study. It is shown that international experiences during the course of study are positively associated with the readiness to move for a job as indicated by the radius considered when searching for a job. As a result, graduates who have had international mobility experiences during the studies consider a wider spatial range of job offers. This leads to a systematic advantage when analyzing income development as well as wage-levels five years after graduation.

**VET and Higher Education: Two Worlds, Two Frameworks?**  
*Lorenz Lassnigg, IHS, research group equi-employment-qualification-innovation, Austria*

The paper is related to (F) Policy Development, and addresses the question of how VET and higher education (HE) might be combined in a Qualification Framework (QF). It starts with the experience in Austria, where an overarching national QF has been envisaged at the beginning of the process, however, has been turned down afterwards. Two research questions will be specifically addressed: First, how does the Austrian experience fit into a comparative picture? Is the gap between VET and HE a common phenomenon, or specific to certain structures of systems? Second, which factors can explain a gap between VET and HE? Is it the gap between different kinds of knowledge, or a certain relationship to the social structures, or have political mistakes been made during the implementation process?
These questions are approached by institutional analysis, taking material from the policy process as a main source of research. The hypotheses which are tried are the following: (1) There is a lack of language for the political communication of the different kinds of knowledge processed in different parts of education, in particular about knowledge needed for innovation; because of this lack the relationships of VET and HE tend to be posed into a contradictory frame; (2) a tendency to increase a social gap and competition between VET and HE is inherent in systems which are still resembling to past structures of elite HE systems; (3) a political structure related to status competition makes the development of an overarching qualification framework particularly difficult. Austria will be shown as an example of having all of the three traits and contrasting systems will be tried to be found, which might contradict the hypotheses.

**Implications of the Bologna Process for Graduate Employment and Throughput in the Higher Education Sector: An empirical Illustration Based on Finnish-British Comparison**

**(Matti Lindberg, Research Unit for the Sociology of Education (RUSE), University of Turku, Finland)**

Hastening the throughput of the Finnish higher education (HE) sector is considered essential for improving the system’s efficiency and lowering its financial burden on the national economy. In the Finnish context, the policy discussions that have been held to address the problems with the delay in the average beginning of the graduates' working careers have primarily emphasised the structural organisation of the programmes and degree system in the framework of the Bologna process. Consequently, less attention has been given to the dynamics of the HE-to-work transition and the market mechanisms related to graduate employment. By comparing the HE-to-work transitions of Finnish and British graduates, this paper intends to illustrate the challenges the Finnish HE system will face as it attempts to hasten the throughput of students. The Finnish HE system is representative of a system that operates in an occupation-specific and relatively strictly-regulated labour market context, whereas the labour market context for the British HE system is essentially the most liberal in Europe. The results of the study suggest that it is not the length of the first degree programmes per se that determines the throughput of the HE sector, but the relative emphasis placed on the opportunity structures pertaining to HE participation and on career mobility in the labour market. The data used for the empirical analysis come from a project commonly known as the REFLEX. Additional data is used for illustrating recent developments in the Finnish context.
Change of the University Management System for Enhancing the Employability of Graduates

*(Victor Pushnykh, Tomsk Polytechnic University, Russian Federation)*

Due to globalization of all social and economic processes in modern society the system of higher education was presented with new demanding challenges. It is especially true for the Russian universities since Russia entered the transition to a market economy quite recently. The most important challenges for the Russian universities were:

1) how to become competitive on the world educational market, and

2) how to train graduates who could be competitive on the international labor market.

As industry is more sensible to a market those challenges were addressed to the industrial employers. In order to bring together the standpoints of academia and industry a series of special training sessions has been conducted under supervision of Tomsk Polytechnic University and Tomsk Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Academics, university administrators and employers from industry took part in the trainings. Trainings allowed developing a set of competences that are necessary for the university graduates to be employable and competitive on the labor market. However, the trainings demonstrated some divergences of opinions of academics and employers. A special research showed that these divergences rooted from the difference between business and academic organizational cultures which are a factor highly influencing on the management systems. Also, the peculiarities of the academic organizational culture were studied as well as the way of adjusting of the academic organizational culture to the market conditions were explored in this research. Implementation of the research results allowed enhancing employability of graduates of the Tomsk Polytechnic University.

Job Search Methods used by Young Professionals and Recruitment Methods Used By Employers: What works

*(Cem Tanova, Eastern Mediterranean University, Turkey)*

Informal methods are used both by job seekers and firms to find jobs and to fill vacancies. Pellizzari (2004) has shown that personal contacts are among the most important channels that match job seekers and jobs. This study investigates the use of informal methods to find employment at the individual level using the European Community Household Panel (ECHP) data and the use of informal recruitment methods by firms using the Cranfield Network on Comparative Human Resource Management (CRANET) data. In the current study issues such as the impact of gender on the use of informal networks to find employment, the starting pay and the pay after several years of work, the type of jobs (permanent or non permanent), level of job satisfaction and actual voluntary turnover are taken into consideration from the perspective of job seekers. Comparisons between countries and industries are also carried out. Whether informal contacts are more likely to lead to jobs in smaller businesses is also investigated.
From the perspective of the firms the prevalence of informal recruitment methods by country, the size of the organizations that prefer informal methods and possible organizational and employee outcomes associated with the use of informal methods are investigated. Managerial and policy implications are made in the light of the findings.

**Long-term Career Tracking of Graduates Using Data from the Social Security System**  
(*Martin Unger and Andreas Raggautz, Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS); University of Graz, Austria*)

In a project with the University of Graz, we are tracking all graduates of the university since 2002 using administrative data of the Austrian social security system. The data contains – on a daily basis (!) – information about labour market status, income, and encoded data about the employer (branch, region, number of employees etc.) of all graduates remaining in Austria. This data is matched with data from the University (like field of study, duration, gender, age, other degrees or studies and so on). Hence, our database is large enough to provide detailed information about labour market performance of graduates even on detailed sub-levels.

In the paper, we will first focus on a certain aspect of the results, which might also be very valuable for the planning of graduate surveys: We will show different patterns of labour market integration by field of study (e.g. Pharmaceuticals, Law, Biology and Humanities) and type of degree (Bachelor, Master, Diploma) which differ greatly depending on the time-span after graduation. E.g., in some subjects, nearly all graduates are integrated in the labour market within 6 months, others show immediately after graduation no problem of integration, but between 1 and 2 years after graduation, and in a certain area, we see rising unemployment after 4 years of graduation. We will also propose explanations for these different patterns. However, surveying graduates 1, 3 or 5 years after graduation will deliver results depending on these overarching patterns.

The second part of the presentation will focus on the use of the data by the University itself. What kind of information is helpful, what for and by whom will it be used? Which additional information would the university need to improve the transition of their graduates on the labour market?
Do Young People Acquire Additional Skills in Their First Jobs or Not? And if Yes, Who does (or does Not) and How?
(Walter Van Trier, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration - University of Ghent, Belgium)

Although the mechanism causing the relationship is far from clear (Bills, 2003), the empirical relation between educational outcomes and labour market outcomes has long been established. In a knowledge economy with a transitional labour market, one might expect that acquiring (additional) skills after leaving the educational system (for the first time) acquires a growing importance for maintaining one’s employability. Even to the point of making the opportunity to acquire additional skills an important characteristic of job quality (Green, e.a., 1998) and a potentially important source of cumulative advantage or growing division between the have’s and have not’s in terms of skills and labour market opportunities. In an impressive series of papers Nobel Laureate James Heckman and his collaborators (a.o. Cunha, e.a., 2006, Heckman, 2008) developed a model of skill production technology which leads one to conclude that the most important factor determining the acquisition of additional skills in later phases of the life-cycle is one’s ‘self-productivity’. A potential backlash of the Heckman position is the neglect of factors developing and repairing the lack of skills later in life or the over-emphasizing of those enhancing ‘skill-productivity’ in the early years. Using data from a cohort of Flemish youngsters this paper aims at determining what explains acquiring additional skills during the first job. The paper shows that characteristics of the first job – like educational match, being in an active job or the type of employment relationship – are as important as “self-productivity” (proxied by educational level) for acquiring additional skills in the initial part of the occupational career.