ADEQUACY BETWEEN HIGHER EDUCATION SUPPLY AND EMPLOYERS’ NEEDS (IN THE RURAL AREA)

ADEQUAÇÃO DA OFERTA FORMATIVA SUPERIOR ÀS NECESSIDADES DOS AGENTES EMPREGADORES (NO ESPAÇO RURAL)

LA ADECUACION ENTRE SUMINISTRO DE EDUCACION SUPERIOR Y NECESIDA DE EMPLEADORES’ (EN EL AREA RURAL)

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RESUMO
Contemplando o actual enquadramento contextual e as exigências introduzidas pelo Processo de Bolonha, o móbil principal do presente estudo consiste em apurar se a presente oferta formativa, ao nível do ensino superior ministrado no Baixo Alentejo, vai ao encontro das necessidades e/ou dos interesses laborais dos agentes empregadores afectos à Região. Numa primeira fase do estudo, e com base em técnicas de inquisição directa, toma-se fundamental caracterizar as verdadeiras necessidades, em termos de postos de trabalho, dos agentes empregadores. Posteriormente, proceder-se-á ao confronto dos resultados obtidos, de modo a serem identificadas medidas correctivas ou, simplesmente, serem formuladas orientações de reestruturação e sugestões de melhoria.

Palavras-chave: Adequação Formativa; Bolonha; Espaço Rural; Baixo Alentejo.

ABSTRACT
Based on the present economic context and considering the Bologna Process requisites, the main goal of this study is to determine whether the higher education training offered, in Lower Alentejo, meets the employers’ needs and/or technical interests. In the first phase of the study, inquisition techniques are used to characterize the technical needs of the
Region's employers. Subsequently, the results obtained are compared to identify corrective actions and/or to formulate restructuring guidelines and suggestions for improvement.

Key-words: Educational Adequacy; Bologna; Rural Area; Lower Alentejo.

RESUMEN
Contemplando enmarcar del contexto actual y los requisitos introducidos para el proceso de Bolonia, el móvil principal del actual estudio consiste en el seleccionar si el actual ofrece elemento formativo, al nivel de la educación superior dada en el Alentejo bajo, va a la reunión de las necesidades y/o a los intereses de trabajo de los patrones de los afectos del agente a la región. En una primera fase del estudio, y en base directa de las técnicas de la inquisición, llega a ser básico para caracterizar las necesidades verdaderas, en términos de filas del trabajo, de los patrones del agente. Más adelante, será procedido la confrontación de los resultados conseguidos, para ser identificado midió correctivo o, simplemente, para sejam orientaciones formuladas de la reorganización y sugerencias de la mejora.

Palabras-clave: Adecuación Formativa; Bolonia; Espacio Rural; Bajo Alentejo.

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1. INTRODUÇÃO

The Bologna Process was informally initiated in May 1998, with the Sorbonne declaration. In June 1999, in an official context, the Bologna declaration stated a series of stages that the systems of European higher education should undertake in order to build what it is called as "a globally harmonized area of higher education" (MCTES, 2007). In practical terms, and safeguarding the specificity of each country, one of the major objectives of the Bologna Process is to guarantee any student from any higher education institution, the possibility of receiving training and of getting into any university in any European member state. However, in order for such opportunities of transition and mobility to become a reality, a homogeneous training system is necessary, reflecting the need for uniformity of both the educational and organizational structures in an increasingly larger Europe. According to the Portuguese Ministry for Science, Technology and Higher Education, the advantages resulting from the adoption of the Bologna Process are obvious, as it contributes to the provision of courses and specializations that are similar and comparable in terms of content and duration (MCTES, 2007). In practice, and not forgetting all the obstacles likely to arise from this strategic deep restructuring process, these advantages seem to be accepted by the majority of the existing universities and polytechnics. As an example of this finding, the text posted online by the New University of Lisbon (UNL, 2007) indicates the three main benefits introduced by the Bologna Process: (1) greater flexibility, (2) increased mobility and (3) widely recognized diplomas.

Bearing in mind that: (1) the Portuguese higher education has been affected by profound changes related to the Bologna Process and (2) the specificity of (almost) all of the Lower Alentejo territory (i.e. the rural area) leads to very specific labour needs (cf. Ferreira and Basilio, 2008), this framework aims at serving as a diagnostic tool as to whether the training offered matches the technical needs and/or the interests of the labour employers of the Region under study. To pursue this main objective, this study will also fulfill other more specific goals, such as:

- To characterize the level of the offered training in the Region;
- To identify the labour employers’ technical needs;
- To stimulate innovation capacity and critical analysis;
Given the objectives outlined under this framework, it is considered that the associated research assumes a quantitative descriptive nature. Therefore, quantitative tools (e.g. questionnaires and forms that employ sampling procedures) will be used to assess the labour employers' technical needs (for further details, see Ghiglione and Matalon, 1991). Figure 1 outlines the methodology adopted during the study.

According to Figure 1, the Diverging Stage is considered essential for the pursuit of the stated objectives. At this stage, a questionnaire will be administered to a sample of employers, within the selected geographical area. Indeed, by reaching a considerable percentage of the population (and independent indices of geographical dispersion), by ensuring the anonymity and by providing the economy of time and uniformity of answers, it seems clear that a research by questionnaire fits perfectly in the context of this study (Ghiglione and Matalon, 1991). In terms of statistical treatment of the collected data, the research process will use the computer application SPSS – Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

In broad terms, the overall outcome is expected to determine whether the results could serve to address any gaps between the existing education guidelines and the identified technical needs. Considering the objectives that guide this study, beneficiaries will be
the higher education institutions that are ministering in the Region, as well as the employers that are operating in the selected geographical area.

2. THE BOLOGNA PROCESS: A BRIEF APPROACH

The Bologna Process, materialized in the Bologna Declaration (signed on 19th June 1999), is an agreement between the European Ministers of Education, which denotes a deep strategic change in policies related to higher education, and seeks to establish a European Higher Education Area. While not being a treaty, the Declaration of Bologna (and the whole process itself) materialized a commitment on the part of the signatory countries, to promote reforms in the education systems in order to standardize those systems and focus a cohesive and competitive European education space (IST, 2005 and IPS, 2007). In practice, the Bologna Declaration considers Education as a variable of great importance in the development of sustainable, democratic and tolerant societies.

As previously mentioned, the Bologna Process aims at adopting policies and at taking joint action in order to ensure the international competitiveness of the European higher education system, while raising the level of excellence and global attraction. As stated by MCTES (2007), "the Bologna Process is the purpose of building the European Higher Education Area, cohesive, competitive and attractive to teachers and students of European and third countries". However, under the umbrella of this broader goal, other targets are to be achieved, namely:

- To promote employability and competitiveness in the European area;
- To achieve convergence in the organization of higher education and in the recognition of academic degrees;
- To adopt a system based on three levels of study (i.e. Bachelor's, MSc and PhD);
- To establish a common system of transferable and cumulative credits (i.e. ECTS - European Credit Transfer System), which promotes a wider mobility of students;
- To implement the Diploma Supplement;
- To promote equality in access to opportunities to study and/or training for students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff;
- To stimulate European cooperation in the field of quality and the definition of comparable criteria and methodologies;
- To promote curriculum development and the establishment of integrated programmes of study, training and/or research.

Given these objectives, it seems clear that the Bologna Process represents "a new model of education" (IPS, 2007). Thus, education and training necessarily aim at creating more and better jobs (IPB, 2005). However, this new model, based on design capabilities and on the development of students' skills, should not be considered a mere mechanism for the transmission of knowledge. In fact, the process represents a radical break, in higher education, from the more traditional forms of teaching and/or learning. Based on this, the restructuring of the training courses reflects the most visible face of the Bologna Process. Indeed, the most visible difference is, precisely, the reduction of the courses' duration (i.e. three years for undergraduate degrees and two to four semesters for a Master's) (IPS, 2007). Moreover, as quoted by MCTES (2007), "the adoption of measures to reduce the rates of school dropouts is, of course, of great importance". Therefore, to create the conditions for the widespread taste for knowledge is also an outcome to be achieved at short term (Ary, 2006). Given the above, reforms are necessary in order to achieve a greater efficiency, modernization and simplification of procedures, to a desirable level of excellence and that, by itself, are guided by profiles of increasing competitiveness. Thus, collective efforts have been made to intensify the state of convergence as a "centre of excellence and engine of development" (MCTES, 2007). Nonetheless, the process is still far from being completed and, of course, requires that governments, higher education institutions and business associations assume a shared responsibility.

3. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN LOWER ALENTEJO

Following other European countries, Portugal has also been working to become an integral part of the European Higher Education Area. In that sense, regulation 74/2006 of March 24th
establishes the legal framework that allows institutions to adopt the Bologna assumptions. Indeed, the higher education system in Portugal should be organized and operated under the new paradigm of education by the year 2010 (see MCTES, 2007). Nevertheless, according to the stated deadlines, most of these institutions shall be offering new courses of study before that date (DGEP, 2007).

In practical terms, the demands for convergence between Portugal and the other countries that signed the Agreement are contained in the reprogramming of Science and Innovation Program 2010, which advocates measures to support the adoption of procedures and necessary practices for the implementation of Bologna within the various Portuguese higher education institutions. Under the adoption of the Bologna Process and following the example of what is happening in the rest of the country, higher education institutions in Lower Alentejo have been submitting to the authorities a set of proposals for courses’ adequacy, as well as series of new courses of one and two cycles (i.e. Graduations and Masters).

Some of these proposals received approval and came into operation during the academic year of 2006/2007. Figure 2 outlines the present higher education supply in the region under analysis.

According to Figure 2, Social Services, Health, Engineering, Business Management and Education are among the most representative areas of study in the region (for further developments, see Ferreira and Basilio, 2008).
Figure 2 — Region's Present Higher Education Supply (Number of Students currently being trained in the region, Source: INE, 2007: 95, adap.)

4. THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING ADEQUACY

In a period when competition, at a European level has become an important and multifaceted success factor for organizations, Portuguese firms need to adopt quality standards in order to be able to participate in the "European area" and compete with companies from the other European countries (Vilhena, 2007). On this basis, one of the areas of action consists on the recruitment and selection of qualified labour (Chiavenato, 1993 and Bancaleiro, 2006), and neglecting the role of higher education institutions is omitting one of the most important vehicles to achieve excellence.
Indeed, regardless of their size and/or their geographical location, universities and polytechnic institutes are designed to contribute to the development of the community in which they operate, promoting excellence in higher education and fostering and developing research activities that are essential to quality education (IPB, 2005). Furthermore, it must be clearly understood that students (i.e. future collaborators) should be encouraged to leave the traditional attitude of "knowledge recipients" to become the leading actors in the construction of their capabilities (IST, 2005). Following this logic, it seems to make sense to question whether the higher education institutions in Lower Alentejo have provided proper training for the employers' labour needs. In practical terms, this question assumes a mounting importance considering the Lower Alentejo's economic, social and cultural characteristics, and that these characteristics heavily influence the type of companies operating in the region (for further details, see Ferreira and Basilio, 2008).

The geographical, economic, social and technological characteristics of the Lower Alentejo are very specific. This, the largest region of Portugal, is simultaneously one of its poorest (INE, 2006 and Ferreira et al., 2008). As a result of the rural exodus of recent decades, the region has born witness to a decline in the population density index, the ageing of residents and a significant weakening of business, with a clear impact on the local working population. Moreover, with this rural environment, most companies are predominantly oriented toward Agriculture or Tourism, which leads to an unbalanced economic structure, with the added weight of the primary sector and a near absence of extractive and transforming industries (for a more in-depth characterization of the region, see Santos, 2005, and INE, 2006). In this regard and, as mentioned earlier, higher education institutions should also play an important role through the stimulus of entrepreneurship (Drucker, 1985, and CEDVG, 2007).

The specificity of the environment brings, as a consequence, the specification of business (Sousa, 1996). In order to respond to that specificity, it is particularly important to provide employees with a basic knowledge and with a spirit of initiative that may reverse the trend of economic cycles in recent years. Indeed, it is precisely this spirit of initiative that should be implemented by the Bologna Process, which aims at improving working conditions, the widespread sharing of knowledge and improved human resource. In fact, one of the
objectives of Bologna is, precisely, to promote employability and competitiveness in the European area (see Point 2 of this study). These issues justify this enquiry into whether higher education institutions in the Lower Alentejo have provided proper training.

5. THE QUESTIONNAIRE

5.1 GOALS AND STRUCTURE

Basically, the questionnaire used in this study aims at gathering information to: (1) examine the adequacy of higher education training in the Lower Alentejo; (2) detect the main technical needs of potential employers; and (3) ask about the importance of teaching foreign languages with a view to possible strategic alliances with foreign companies. Based on these goals, the questionnaire that was designed for data collection (see Appendix), which benefitted greatly from the expertise obtained in interviews with managers and other skilled technicians, visits to workplaces and, of course, from literature (Ghiglione and Matalon, 1991, and Monteiro Barata, 1996). The questionnaire was organised in three sections: the first, composed of issues related to the Bologna Process, aimed at obtaining the respondents' perceptions on the process and/or the implications arising from it; the second aimed at ascertaining the technical needs of employers and staff; and, finally, the third section aimed at characterizing the institutions surveyed.

As for the questionnaire’s validity, Ghiglione and Matalon’s orientations have been followed (see Ghiglione and Matalon, 1991). Besides, several researchers assessed the adequacy of the instrument for reaching the defined objectives. To this purpose, valuable assistance was obtained from the researchers of the Departmental Areas of Mathematics and Statistics and Management of the School of Technology and Management of Beja (ESTIG – Escola Superior de Tecnologia e Gestão).

As for the sample, the geographical area of the Lower Alentejo (with the highest incidence in the District of Beja) and the highest levels of concentration and convenience revealed by entities that collaborate regularly with the ESTIG constituted the selection criteria used to define the sample.
5.2 LIMITATIONS

Given the established objectives, the limited availability revealed by some of the respondents in completing their questionnaires was among the factors that limited the scope of this study. Moreover, given the need for the sample to be composed of managers and/or qualified technicians from business, another major obstacle has been access to those individuals. Underlying the limitations are also delays in completing and mailing the questionnaires on the part of some of the respondents. Moreover, the resistance of some respondents to sharing information was a strong barrier to the study despite the fact that questions were qualitative and that guarantees were given that data would be used exclusively for academic purposes and under a code of strict confidentiality.

6. EMPIRICAL RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

6.1 SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

As previously mentioned, the sample in this study is a convenience or accidental sample. However, this does not invalidate the results achieved and cannot challenge their interpretation because, according to Bryman, in Monteiro Barata (1996: 429), if we take into consideration that the percentage of responses from an opinion survey is often low, we will see that the gap between research based on random samples and on samples of convenience is not as great as could be expected. Accordingly, the sample is composed of one hundred companies based in the Lower Alentejo and with greater incidence in the District of Beja. Charts 1 and 2 illustrate the types of companies surveyed, according to their dimension and type of economic activity.
Careful analysis of charts 1 and 2 concludes that the sample used for this study is composed mostly of micro-enterprises (64%) allocated to the Tertiary Sector (i.e. Trade and Services) (28% and 70%, respectively). Based on this, this sample reflects the very general characterization of the business environment in the region of the Lower Alentejo (and in the District of Beja, in particular). In terms of international economic transactions, only 24% of the companies surveyed revealed that they are engaged in international trade (chart 3).
In fact, this 24% figure clearly shows the low representation of international trade in the region under study. Moreover, its expression is even lower if we consider that the main source of international partnerships is Spain (57%). The information illustrated in chart 4 indicates that Germany represents the second highest expression in strategic partnerships with European countries (16%).

With regard to the age of the companies, most (74%) have been operating for more than three years. However, some of the businesses in the region are very recent (chart 5).
In short, with regard to the characterization of the sample, it is mainly composed of micro-enterprises (64%), allocated to the Tertiary Sector (i.e. Trade and Services) (28% and 70% respectively), operating for more than three years (74%) and, despite its small expression, trade is focused on Spain as a strategic partner.

6.2 MAIN RESULTS REACHED

The analysis and interpretation of the results of the direct enquiry will be presented based on the two major thematic components aggregated in the questionnaire.

6.2.1 Degree Of Knowledge Of The Bologna Process And Its Implications

The first issue of the questionnaire sought to identify the companies' degree of knowledge of the Bologna Process. With no apparent surprise, it was found that 88% of the sample is aware of this new reality for higher education (Chart 6).

Following the results obtained, great merit should be attributed to the authorities, since there appears to be adequate dissemination of information on the problem and its consequences to economic agents. Accordingly, the subsequent two questions of the questionnaire aimed at establishing whether the employers (i.e. surveyed companies) are aware of the impact that the Bologna Process could have (or not) on the reduction of regional asymmetries, and the advantages that may arise from its adoption. Charts 7 and 8 expose the perception of this new reality by the surveyed companies.
Based on the results illustrated in Chart 7, it appears that 75% of the companies agreed with the fact that the changes arising from the adoption of the Bologna Process can contribute to the reduction of the existing regional asymmetries, which confirms the ideas expressed by Ferreira and Teixeira (2008). Following Chart 8, this reduction of asymmetries can be materialised through the assimilation of certain advantages that have arisen, including: a higher degree of convergence among European Union member states (3,750); an increased supply of qualified labour (3,614); and
reduction of courses' duration (e.g. 3 years for an undergraduate degree) (3,721). It seems to be worth recalling that the averages of the responses are associated to a Lickert scale from 1 to 5 (1=total disagreement and 5=total agreement) (for further methodological details on the scales, see Monteiro Barata, 1996).

![Chart 8 - Apparent Advantages Arising From the Adoption of the Bologna Process (Lickert Average Values, N=88)](chart8)

The analysis of chart 8 also shows that there is not a great discrepancy between the attractiveness rates of the items allocated to this issue. This occurrence is justified by the fact that these advantages may be strongly correlated with each other (see Ghiglione and Matalon, 1991).

![Chart 9 - Confrontation Analysis (% Values, N=88)](chart9)
The fourth issue of the survey aimed at establishing a comparative perception of the top employers before and after joining the Bologna Process. It is worth recording the division of opinion, because 39% characterized the current situation as better than before and 30% reported that the current situation is worse than the previous one. 20% of the companies are in doubt or without a formulated conclusion. Chart 9 illustrates this division of opinions, where 11% considered that the situation is still the same as before.

6.2.2 Employers' Technical Needs

The second group of the questionnaire aimed at characterizing employers' labour needs to determine the adequacy of the training given in the region. Accordingly, the first question of the second part of the questionnaire sought to characterize the perception of the companies as to the sufficiency of three years of schooling for technical training. Chart 10 illustrates that perception, where 66% of the sample stated that 3-year degrees are sufficient to meet their daily needs. Chart 11 shows the potential supply of labour.

Indeed, when confronted with the potential labour supply, 35% of the agents declared their willingness to hire a recent graduate under Bologna. According to chart 11, 36% (i.e. 18% + 18%) of agents are willing to employ two and even more than three graduates, respectively.
The third issue of the second group of the questionnaire sought to identify the real needs faced by employers in the region. To some extent, this issue has also been important to draw conclusions about the adequacy of the higher education ministered in the region (considering the information presented in Figure 2). Indeed, based on a Likert scale from 1 to 5 (1 = nothing receptive and 5 = very receptive), it was found that areas with greater supply of jobs are: Finance and Accounting (3,400); Computers (2,964); Sales (2,828) and Producing Areas (2,667). Chart 12 illustrates the preferences of companies on the labour supply.

In practical terms, two conclusions seem to be immediate: (1) on one hand, there is a clear convergence of interests in labour areas related to Business Management (i.e. Finance and Accounting); (2) on the other hand, there seems to be some discrepancy between the interests of available training and employment with regard to areas such as Information Technology (with a high labour supply but with low levels of student interest) and Social Services, Engineering and Science Education (with high rates of student interest, but with a reduced supply of labour in the region under study).

The fourth issue of the second group of questions focused on the influence of the origin of the degree of engagement in the hiring decision. In other words, the aim was to ascertain to what extent the nationality of the graduate might be a differentiation factor in the hiring process. In this regard, it should be noted that one of
the objectives of the Bologna Process is to promote employability and competitiveness in the European area (see Point 2 of this study). Chart 13 illustrates the division of opinions and points to 48% of respondents undecided (or hesitant) in response.

![Chart 13 - Division of Opinions](image)

The fifth issue of the second group aimed at analysing the employers' perception regarding the technical expertise that is expected from recent graduates, in order to meet the requirements of the Region's economic structure. Chart 14 illustrates the preferences registered, which are: Informatics and New Technologies (4,204); Health (4,143); Tourism (4,000); Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (3,957) and Business Management (3,755).
Based on a Likert scale from 1 to 5 (1=no relevance and 5=very important), the agents' preferences seem to give some sustainability to the following conclusions (see again Figure 2): (1) once again, there seems to be some convergence of interests in areas associated with Business Management (e.g. Finance and Accounting), (2) there seems to be, again, some mismatch of interests in areas such as Informatics and New Technologies (with a high labour supply but with low rates of interest as areas of study) and (3) areas like Health and Tourism, while relatively relegated to
second plan as areas of study, are identified as highly sought after by the employers of the region.

Chart 15 — Languages' Degree of Relevance (Likert Average Values, N=100)

The last issue of the second group (i.e. the tenth question) aimed at clarifying the need for languages taught in higher education. Indeed, based on a Likert scale from 1 to 5 (1=no relevance and 5=very important), the agents' preferences seem to give some priority to Portuguese (4,920) and English (4,220). Chart 15 illustrates the degree of relevance of the different languages identified.

Based on a comparison of chart 4 and 15, a clear contradiction in the collected responses arises. On one hand, Germany has been considered one of the Alentejo's most important strategic partners (see Chart 4); on the other hand, reduced importance has been given to the German language. Of course, given the relevance of the English language (4,220) (see Chart 15), a substitution relationship between languages can be ascribed (i.e. the English language may replace the German language in the course of different trade relations). However, it seems important to note the projection of the German language, especially in light of the information illustrated in Chart 4. Moreover, the projection of the Spanish language seems equally clear, which reinforces the importance of Spain as a key strategic partner in the Alentejo's international business relations. From this point of view, there is a
significant need to strengthen the emphasis on foreign language teaching, including English, Spanish and German.

6.3 SUGGESTIONS

Despite the previously presented limitations, the results of this empirical application seem to reinforce the need for a greater reflection on the strategic guidelines that have been adopted by the Region's higher education institutions. Indeed, matters as: (1) existing gaps between employment supply and people's indifference for some areas of study and (2) linguistic shortcomings in international business relations are just some of the aspects that seem to warrant a more thorough and careful analysis.

Given the risks inherent to the adoption of a new education system, and given the duration of the effects of some variables, there is a clear opportunity to apply, in addition, other qualitative analyses (e.g. benchmarks). This measure aims at helping the estimation of the most indirect or intangible strategic and structural impacts.

Finally, it seems equally relevant to recommend the use of longitudinal analyses to assess, for example, the changing duration and how factors change. The longitudinal analyses will meet the changing trends of these factors and examine the different results and constraints involved in a dimension of an ever-wider analysis.

7. CONCLUSIONS

In this study, it has been possible to observe that, given the implications arising from the adoption of the Bologna Process, a more formalised planning requires the involvement of the academic and the business communities. Indeed, it is necessary to integrate this complementary relationship in the higher education strategic system. Therefore, the growing importance of the relationship between academia and the labour market seems to be considerably strengthened by this application.

In practical terms, it has been possible to see that, although the existence of some convergence points between the areas of study taught in the Region and the labour needs of the employers (e.g. the strong correlation between study interest and labour supply
in some areas as Finance and Accounting), some mismatches are also taking place. Indeed, these differences are particularly evident in areas such as Information Technology (with high labour supply but with low rates of interest as study area) and Social Services, Engineering and Education (with high rates of interest as study areas, but with reduced labour supply in the Region under analysis).

Moreover, the present study has yet to follow up the incipient line of existing research on the adoption of the Bologna Process and its impacts on the Lower Alentejo Region. Being an exploratory study, and limited in time, it would be interesting to renew the research and deepen its analysis taking a more dilated sample.

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Obs.: This survey has academic objectives and the confidentiality of the answers will be naturally ensured. The document ends with the expression "End of the Survey".

Filling Instructions:

Correct: ■ Incorrect: ☐

I – Degree of Knowledge on the Bologna Process and its Implications

1. Do you know what the Bologna Process consists of?
   (Tick your preferred answer, according to the filling instructions)
   ☐ Ye ☐
   (If you answered No, move to question 7)

2. Do you consider that the adoption of common education policies, in the European Space, contributes to the reduction of the regional asymmetries?
   (Tick your preferred answer, according to the filling instructions)
   ☐ Ye ☐

3. Which are the main advantages at the labour market's level, that in your opinion result from the adoption of the Bologna Process?
   (Tick your preferred answer for each item, considering a scale from 1 to 5 (1= total disagreement e 5= total agreement))
   ☑ ☑ ☑ ☑ ☑ Increase of labour competencies
   ☑ ☑ ☑ ☑ ☑ Increase of the number of foreign employees
   ☑ ☑ ☑ ☑ ☑ Increase of the index of labour competitiveness
   ☑ ☑ ☑ ☑ ☑ Higher exigency from the employers
   ☑ ☑ ☑ ☑ ☑ Higher degree of convergence among EU member states
   ☑ ☑ ☑ ☑ ☑ Increased supply of unqualified labour
   ☑ ☑ ☑ ☑ ☑ Increased supply of qualified labour
   ☑ ☑ ☑ ☑ ☑ Promotion of Employability
   ☑ ☑ ☑ ☑ ☑ Reduction of courses' duration (e.g. 3 years graduation)

4. In comparison to the previous higher education system, and in a perspective of labour competencies, how do you describe the "new situation" resulting from the introduction of the Bologna Process in our country?
   (Tick your preferred answer, according to the filling instructions)
   ☐ Worse situation than the previous one
   ☐ Similar situation to the previous one
   ☐ Better situation than the previous one
II - Employers' Labour Needs

5. Do you consider the 3 years graduations sufficient to meet the needs of the labour market of the Region where you operate?
   (Tick your preferred answer, according to the filling instructions)
   [ ] Ye [ ]

6. How many recent graduates, through the Bologna system, would you be willing to employ?
   (Tick your preferred answer, according to the filling instructions)
   [ ] 3
   (If you answered 0, move to question 9)

7. In which department (or with which functions) would you be more willing to employ a recent graduate?
   (Tick your preferred answer for each item, considering a scale from 1 to 5 (1= nothing receptive e 5= very receptive))
   0 0 0 0 0 Commercial
   0 0 0 0 0 Finance and Accounting
   0 0 0 0 0 Informatics
   0 0 0 0 0 Production
   0 0 0 0 0 Reception
   0 0 0 0 0 Human Resources
   0 0 0 0 0 After-Sale Services

8. Would the origin of that recent graduate (i.e., national or foreigner) influence your decision to hire?
   (Tick your preferred answer, according to the filling instructions)
   [ ] Ye [ ] May be/It

9. What technical knowledge do you consider more relevant within the scope of the present economic structure of the Region?
   (Tick your preferred answer for each item, considering a scale from 1 to 5 (1= no relevance e 5= very important))
   0 0 0 0 0 Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing
   0 0 0 0 0 Architecture and Construction
   0 0 0 0 0 Arts
   0 0 0 0 0 Business Management (e.g. Finance and Accounting)
   0 0 0 0 0 Veterinarian Sciences
10. Which is the degree of relevance you attribute to each of the following languages in the performance of your activity?

(Tick your preferred answer for each item, considering a scale from 1 to 5 (1 = no relevance e 5 = very important))

- [ ] Portuguese
- [ ] English
- [ ] French
- [ ] German
- [ ] Spanish

**III – Characterisation of the Answering Agent**

11. What kind of enterprise do you lead?

(Tick your preferred answer, according to the filling instructions)

- [ ] Micro-Enterprise (< 9 employees)
- [ ] Small-Medium Sized Enterprise (9-49 employees)
- [ ] Large (> 49 employees)
- [ ] Multinational

12. What is the kind of activity developed by your enterprise?

(Tick your preferred answer, according to the filling instructions)

- [ ] Productive
- [ ] Commercial
- [ ] Services

13. Does your enterprise participate in international transactions on a regular basis?

(Tick your preferred answer, according to the filling instructions)

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

(If you answered No, move to question 15)

14. With which country are those international transactions more often established?

(Tick your preferred answer, according to the filling instructions)

- [ ] Germany
15. What age is your enterprise?

(Tick your preferred answer, according to the filling instructions)

☐ 0
☐ 1
☐ 2
☐ 3
☐ > 3