

ALMALAUREA: SIC TRANSIT GLORIA MUNDI

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1. Introduction

The Inter-University Consortium AlmaLaurea [1 – 2] this year celebrates its first twenty years of activity: this bottom-up initiative first started in 1994 as a simple experiment in the basement of the Faculty of Statistics in the University of Bologna, from the idea of Andrea Cammelli, professor of social statistics at the Alma Mater Studiorum (while Fabio Roversi Monaco was the Dean); today, it includes 65 Italian universities from North, South and Central Italy, representing more than 80% of the national student population (Figure 1). Since then, AlmaLaurea has grown not only at home but also abroad, exporting world-wide a system, unique in Europe, that has obtained several acknowledgements on an international scale. In addition to matching job supply and demand, since 1998 – year of the first statistic reports – Alma Laurea has been developing a tool capable of evaluating and monitoring in the short, middle and long term the outcome of graduates' study (after four months from the end of the academic year) and employment after one, three and five years from graduation. Thanks to its annual surveys, the Consortium thus provides each participating university with complete, up-to-date and reliable documentation on the characteristics of their students, sorted by degree course. It moreover contributes to ensuring the Governing Bodies of the universities that are part of the Consortium, together with the Evaluation Cells, and Committees dealing with Teaching Activities and Career Guidance, a reliable and timely basis for documentation and verification, aimed at fostering all decision-making processes and activity planning, with a special focus on student training and services. The immediate on-line availability of the documentation, broken down by type of degree, University, faculty/school/department, disciplinary group, degree course and class therefore allows each university to answer to the requests of the Ministry of Education and of the National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes (ANVUR). Thanks to its database, with almost 2,000,000 certified CVs both in Italian and in English, which are, for the most part, updated to include the most recent work experiences, AlmaLaurea has represented for a long time, for public, private, Italian and foreign companies, an important tool in helping to evaluate potential job applicants, as well as a fundamental platform for effective guidance in choosing a career path after high school. In the last ten years, AlmaLaurea has provided Italian and foreign companies with more than 3 and a half million CVs. AlmaLaurea, moreover, works to facilitate and democratize young people's access to

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the Italian and international job market through the valorization of human capital. In this area, the potential contribution of AlmaLaurea covers various fields, and in particular, the possibility for enterprises to manage their own human resources more efficiently, starting from the selection of university graduates of Italian nationality or from the countries with which companies wish to internationalize themselves [3].

Figure 1. The AlmaLaurea website gathers all information about the world of education and work

2. The Alma Laurea survey

Every year, AlmaLaurea draws up the **Annual Report on Graduates' Employment Situation** [4]: a tool for studying in depth the prospects in the job market and the relations between university students and graduates' employment opportunities, one, three and five years after graduation. It gives a broad and detailed picture of the type of working activity carried out, the salary of the employed and their job satisfaction, the branch and sector in which they work, the use of skills acquired at University for doing their job. This picture is further enriched by enabling interesting comparisons to be made, for example by course, gender, geographical area. In-depth analysis on specific and current issues are explored every year using ad-hoc studies [5]. Each



Figure 2. The AlmaLaurea surveys provide a broad detailed picture of Italian graduates' occupational and educational performances

year AlmaLaurea also draws up its **Report on graduates' profiles** [6], published by the end of May of the following year. The survey analyses and interprets the wealth of information contained in the relevant database for graduates. The abundance of information is guaranteed by the integration of documentation from administrative services of the universities and the information taken from questionnaires submitted to students finishing university. The Graduate Profile Report provides a large detailed photograph of graduates' main characteristics, of their success at university (in terms of degree marks and steady progress in studies), of study conditions in university and satisfaction for the degree course they have just concluded.

3. AlmaDiploma and AlmaOrièntati

AlmaDiploma [7 – 9] was founded in 2000 to promote the insertion of young high school graduates into the employment market through a database called AlmaDiploma, which today numbers almost 300 high school institutes. Created on the AlmaLaurea model, AlmaDiploma has among its main goals that of offering concrete support



Figure 3. The AlmaOrièntati App, the student information and career guidance for high school

in career guidance; to analyze the internal efficacy of educational structures within the Institutes through dedicated surveys; to analyze the external efficacy of educational offers the Institutes provide through systematically monitoring high school graduates' employment opportunities; to implement the AlmaDiploma database constantly and progressively updating high school graduates' professional career. Assuming that right career guidance for young people not only allows a pay-off in terms of reduced costs, but also more satisfied human capital with regard to personal choices, and being more productive for the country, AlmaLaurea and AlmaDiploma created AlmaOriëntati [10] (Figure 3).

The various steps to follow are easily accessible online and have been created with the help of a team of psychologists, sociologists, and experts in statistics and computer science, coordinated by AlmaLaurea, which has set itself an ambitious goal: to tackle the drop-out rate during the first year of university, which is often the result of superficial decision-making.

The pathway is accessible not only from the AlmaLaurea and AlmaDiploma websites, but also by means of a mobile web version for any smartphone and through an App (for Android and iOS); it provides the user with personalized career guidance – but at the same time is accessible to all. At the end, everyone is given a detailed profile, full of ideas to think about. The starting point is the self-assessment the young person makes of his own strengths, in order to subsequently suggest more detailed opportunities through questions about the area of post high school training and employment. Then, on the basis of the preferences expressed about studying subjects, users are provided with a list of degree courses according to the educational contents that best correspond to the interests they have just expressed. In addition, for each degree course, they receive all documentation regarding the survey on the evaluation of their studying experience together with results relating to employment outcomes. This documentation, carefully gathered each year and constantly updated, intends to be of help in making more careful evaluations. AlmaOriëntati has been acknowledged by the MIUR (Ministry of University Education and Research) as a valid tool for career guidance. Every year, more than 60 thousand students complete the AlmaOriëntati pathway, accessing either from AlmaDiploma or AlmaLaurea. AlmaLaurea and AlmaDiploma have been collaborating for several years with high schools, offering specific projects which, besides supporting the AlmaOriëntati pathway through cooperation between teachers and Alma experts, offer free placement tools in order to make schools increasingly more autonomous in their relations with firms in their own geographical area.

4. AlmaLaurea in the world

The international value of the AlmaLaurea model and the advantages for Italian and foreign graduates and post-graduates was already acknowledged in 2009 as part of the study entitled “Do Online Labor Market Intermediaries Matter? The Impact of AlmaLaurea on the University-to-Work Transition”, in the volume *Studies of Labor Market Intermediation* by M.F. Bagues and M. Sylos Labini and presented at the National Bureau of Economic Research [11]. AlmaLaurea's international activity [12] is growing



Figure 4. The Hen-gear project presentation at the University of Economics in Armenia

every year: in fact, ten years ago the Consortium obtained acknowledgement (and funding) from the European Union for an experimental project with universities in Poland, Hungary, the Netherlands, France and Italy at international level, and to extend the model, in the next three years, in Morocco, Tunisia, Armenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro (using EU funding)(Figure 4).

In 2011, the Times Higher Education noted the countless positive aspects of the AlmaLaurea model with an 8-column article entitled: “Bella figura: Italian model sets trend with expert fitting service” [13]. Soon after, the EUNIS (European University Information Systems) recognized in the AlmaLaurea system, in its organizational model and ability, a best practice in the use of IT systems in the field of higher education, awarding the Consortium the first prize of the EUNIS Elite Award for Excellence [14]. The award had not been assigned for three years. As further proof, in 2014 AlmaLaurea was invited to the fourth EUNIS Rectors’ Conference on the theme “The New Digital Era in Higher Education”, to present its model to an audience formed by experts in IT technology applied to higher education in the major European Universities [15].

But a successive and even greater acknowledgement came in June 2013, when AlmaLaurea, invited by the World Bank, successfully presented its model in Washington (Figure 5). A great award for the whole country, and a commendation of its activities, representing a global model for the University system worldwide [16 - 17].



Figure 5. Presentation of AlmaLaurea at the World Bank in Washington

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Biographical notes

Andrea Camelli taught Social Statistics at the University of Bologna until 2012. His own research has focused on the long-term analysis of educational processes. He was a member of the Commission for statistics at UNESCO in Paris. In 1994 he founded the Inter-University Consortium ALMALAUREA. A model subsequently extended to upper secondary school with AlmaDiploma and AlmaOrièntati. Thanks to the support of the European Union, ALMALAUREA is now committed to extending its model in Morocco, Tunisia, Armenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro. ALMALAUREA has recently been presented in Washington at the invitation of the World Bank.