

## RATIONALE

The 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference of EURASHE in 2013 comes at a moment when we are in a process of re-formulating our priorities, on the basis of our overarching policy paper '*Towards a Diversified, Responsive and Competitive European Higher Education*'<sup>1</sup>, which was communicated to the Ministers of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) on the occasion of the Ministerial Conference in April 2012 in Bucharest (Romania).

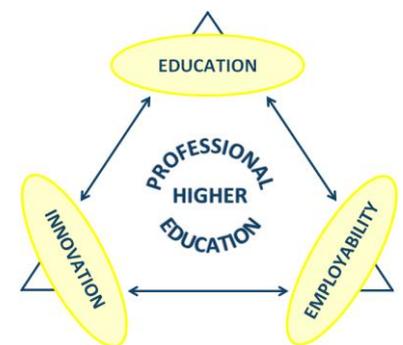
This comprehensive document outlines our position on priority areas which we are now in a position to help implement on the level of the individual institutions, members of EURASHE and other higher education institutions (HEIs) with professionally-oriented programmes.

In this Conference we focus on what we have identified as key features of the **Knowledge Triangle**, and what this entails for HEIs engaged in applied research and experimental developments.

The 2012 Bucharest Ministerial Communiqué, which sets out the priorities in the countries of the EHEA for 2012-2015, under the impulse of EURASHE put forward as an action line on the institutional level to “encourage knowledge-based alliances in the EHEA, focusing on research and technology”<sup>2</sup>.

EURASHE as the voice of professional higher education in the Bologna Process endeavours to carry out this action line, by linking **EDUCATION**, **INNOVATION** and **EMPLOYABILITY** in a **KNOWLEDGE TRIANGLE** in which professionally-oriented programmes play an important role.

The Conference opens with a look at the above links of the **KNOWLEDGE TRIANGLE** on a **systemic level**, through the eyes of the **hosting country Croatia**, while taking into account the European Commission’s view on Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI), and we will be inspired by major political voices on the national and European levels. We will then go in details into each of the key features of the Knowledge Triangle.



The three subsequent Conference tracks (with interactive workshops, roundtable sessions and panel discussions) will develop the three major themes, namely identifying professional higher education in the EHEA, creating knowledge in the institutions in close cooperation with stakeholders, and finally how to make this Knowledge Triangle work, for the benefit of institutions, students and graduates.

During the first track on day one in the plenary meetings we look at how different countries shape their **EDUCATION** policies and we are presented with issues like the comparison of European HE systems (with a specific input from the on-going HAPHE initiative on the *mission and profile of professionally-oriented HEIs*); the strategic frameworks for the

<sup>1</sup> '*Towards a Diversified, Responsive and Competitive European Higher Education*', EURASHE’s policy priorities communicated to the EHEA Ministers, Bucharest, April 2012, Available on our website at: [http://www.eurashe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/EURASHE\\_overarching\\_policy\\_paper\\_April2012.pdf](http://www.eurashe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/EURASHE_overarching_policy_paper_April2012.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Bucharest Ministerial Communiqué (recommendations), April 2012



development of professional higher education; and the professional and academic education in the binary system of higher education.

On the second Conference day, the track on research and **INNOVATION** takes this forward on the institutional level, and examines with examples of good practice the implications for Universities of Applied Sciences of novel themes like *entrepreneurship as a generic skill*, experimental developments as a result of research, open access to research results and research data<sup>3</sup>, knowledge transfer and student involvement in research and innovation, valorisation of multi-rank outputs, etc.

Finally, the track on **EMPLOYABILITY** will explore the routes proposed in the European Commission's communication '*Rethinking Education*'<sup>4</sup> on issues like employability in a lifelong learning context, recognition of prior learning, dual and work-based learning opportunities, employability of bachelors, development and roles of Career Centres.

The conference will, with the above themes, contribute to the discussions in the countries and stakeholder organisations on the European Commission's **Horizon 2020** policies. Horizon 2020 focuses on turning scientific breakthroughs into innovative products that provide opportunities for business and also for the wider society. The rationale behind this is that "Europe's future economic growth and the employment of its citizens will depend on innovation in products, services and business models"<sup>5</sup>.

In Europe SMEs are still the major creators of jobs and therefore the existing gap between academia and the market must be bridged, thus stimulating the transfer of technology to SMEs.

The rules of participation in Horizon 2020 rightly focus on three indicators: *excellence, impact and implementation*. If we want to realise the major goals of Horizon 2020, namely to foster innovation by transferring knowledge to the market and the wider community in the most efficient and useful way, impact and dissemination of results become equally important criteria as excellence<sup>6</sup>.

It is however true that innovation needs a wider interpretation than to be seen as the logical step to commercial application. The whole spectrum of sciences (from engineering and technical sciences, medical and life sciences to the social sciences and arts and humanities) contribute to an innovative society. Only in this way can the 'societal grand challenges' be tackled. It is especially from the interdisciplinary perspective that the social sciences and humanities play an invaluable role in the innovation strategy<sup>7</sup>.

In the on-going reform processes of higher education society is best served through the involvement of broad groups of stakeholders, as EURASHE clearly stated in its message to the Bologna Ministers' Conference in Bucharest (April 2012): "progress in each domain [*the Bologna priorities*] very much depended on the willingness of governments and stakeholders to reform higher education"<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> European Commission background note on open access to publications and data in Horizon 2020, October 2012

<sup>4</sup> EC's Communication '*Rethinking Education*', November 2012

<sup>5</sup> Horizon 2020

<sup>6</sup> Statement UASnet on the rules of participation in Horizon 2020 (Universities of Applied Sciences network)

<sup>7</sup> EUA position on the EC Green Paper on a Common Strategic Framework for EU Research and Innovation Funding (European University Association)

<sup>8</sup> '*Towards a Diversified, Responsive and Competitive European Higher Education*', EURASHE's policy priorities communicated to the EHEA Ministers, Bucharest, April 2012, Available on our website at: [http://www.eurashe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/EURASHE\\_overarching\\_policy\\_paper\\_April2012.pdf](http://www.eurashe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/EURASHE_overarching_policy_paper_April2012.pdf)