

## RATIONALE

The Seminar on *Building bridges for a more professional higher education* is a 2 day event focusing on the mission of professional higher education (PHE). It is intended to inspire institutional management, staff members, the world of work and policy-makers in profiling their institutions and their everyday work.

Throughout Europe a significant number of institutions and programmes recognise themselves in a number of features that are linked to the predicate 'professional'. PHE however cannot uniformly be defined within similar historical levels and (national) higher education structures, and even not to certain types of institutions and ways of learning. This because the programmes and institution that want to be styled as professional operate within the same triangle of education, knowledge creation (research) and services to the community, as would be expected from any form of higher education in the European landscape (now the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)). The contours of such (European) higher education are universally accepted by the different parties, including stakeholders like students and employers, as defined by the Council of Europe's 'four purposes' of higher education, irrespective of the type and form of higher education.

Professional higher education is often associated with applied research, as opposed to classical universities who focus on basic research, but is characterised through experimental development and (other) services to the community. That becomes apparent with the close relationship between PHE institutions and its stakeholders.

Another feature is the pride of place that is given to the paradigm of 'learning outcomes'. This is because PHE, and certainly its study programmes are shaped by specific professional goals or needs, in which the contexts of the future professions are clear and the learning outcomes are defined by the professional needs, in terms of integrated competences. A focus on learning outcomes comes naturally to PHE, due to its strong links with the professional world, in different forms of cooperation, via curriculum design and monitoring, work placements and internships, etc.

EURASHE has focused in the past years on the mission of professional higher education, mainly through the HAPHE (Harmonising Approaches to Professional Higher Education in Europe) project. At the very end of the project, EURASHE decided to host this Seminar, based on the outcomes of the organisation's and project's work. While developing '[Profile of Professional Higher Education in Europe](#)', a diversity of approaches has been researched, large amount of stakeholders consulted, bringing us to the final '*Definition and Characteristics of PHE*'. These will serve as a basis for the discussions in Otočec, developing the programme in 3 tracks: *Policy and Strategy, Teaching and Learning and Research, Innovation and Development*. Throughout the sessions grouped around these core characteristics of PHE, we will gather input from institutional representatives, the world of work and other relevant stakeholders. We will as well welcome speakers from various countries in order to share with participants best practices from both institutional and policy point of view. Involvement of different stakeholders, with a strong position of the world of work in the programme will further stimulate building of bridges between the higher education sector and the world of work, for a more professional higher education.