

## EURASHE Annual Conference 2018

### Partnerships for a Digital Future

#### *Strategic role of professional higher education for society*

Tallinn, Estonia, April 19 – 20, 2018

#### Rationale

The challenges emerging in most areas of society and life, but especially those brought by a digitalisation of production and services have got into the core attention of discussions on the future role and development of higher education. The new qualifications (Jobs 4.0), flexible patterns of work, but also requirements for learning and enhanced use of technologies in learning are new aspects to complement the existing expectations towards a more open and flexible higher education, its contribution to innovation and society development and responsiveness to various stakeholders' expectations.

The World Economic Forum (WEF) identifies the changing nature of work together with the mobile and cloud computing processing of big data among the top socio-economic and technological megatrends affecting future developments. The flexibilisation of work will have an impact on patterns of employment and different expectations. The Forum suggests that over the next ten years the drivers of change will cause administrative and routine white-collar office functions to decline significantly while computer, mathematical, architecture and engineering will grow strongly. Other fields like manufacturing and production or personal care and welfare services will transform substantially with new type of jobs growing. There will also be growth in the highly technical jobs families including data analytics and mobile internet. The rise of artificial intelligence is expected to have negative employment impacts in traditionally secure areas such as education, law and finance but not, observers believe, in the short term.

The expected shift could be documented by a revised list of top priority future skills for 2020 as suggested by the World Economic Forum in 2016. While complex problem solving remains at the very top of the list, even more emphasis is likely to be put on creativity and critical thinking in comparison to the current requirements, not neglecting the importance of individuals' capacities for acting within flexible teams. The role of re-training, proactive approach and lifelong learning will be more eminent in such environment and the governments are asked for creating enabling environments and appropriate frameworks to support such development.

Various documents including "A New Skills Agenda for Europe" of the European Commission (2016) note gaps between the existing capacity and skills of European population including graduates and the employment needs and newly emerging requirements for active engagement in social and economic life.

Strengthening **professionally oriented higher education (PHE)** is an important part of such development. The sector has a specific mission of closer engagement with the world of work, respective regional communities and providing a pathway to relevant competencies for a diverse population of students with different backgrounds, age and learning needs and expectations. Professional higher education plays – and should play even more – an eminent role in various areas from professional and personal development of students and other learners within life-long learning, applied research activities to regional development and engagement with business partners, in particular SMEs. While focusing on these agendas PHE should also address another crucial role of higher education – education and development of people for active citizenship and democracy, their personal development and balancing it with professional aspects.

The 28<sup>th</sup> annual conference of EURASHE, the European representation of professional higher education, will provide a thorough picture of the potential and capacity of professional higher education to respond to the new challenges and stakeholders' expectations within the upcoming digitalised era. The broad focus of the conference will be reflected in its structure, having 2 days emphasising a distinct perspective reflected in both keynote addresses and following breakout sessions:

- The educational policies, the role of PHE within diversified higher education systems across Europe, specific mission and features of universities of applied sciences and their service to the society and how are these reflected in concrete academic provisions, curricular, teaching and learning arrangements, research and development activities and engagement of partners, in particular students and the world of work representatives., the sector's attractiveness and perception of the world of work.
- Other relevant policies, expectations from the businesses and other partners from the world of work, various models and approaches to their effective engagement within mutually beneficial strategic partnerships and the specific arrangements for collaboration with SMEs and regional authorities.

While the keynote speakers will be invited to provide a broad overview at the system level based among other on OECD analyses, European Commission policies for higher education, economic, research and innovation development, mapping higher education and business cooperation, the following breakout sessions and good practice will provide concrete examples and an opportunity to get inspiration from existing experience and models, share and learn from the partners' views and discuss further actions for mutually beneficial development.

The conference key tracks are envisaged as guiding lines for potential contributions on innovative and inspiring approaches throughout the conference:

- The mission, role and concept of universities of applied sciences, impact and accountability, promotion within society
- Strategic partnerships with the world of work and other stakeholders, partners' expectations and approaches to their effective engagement
- Innovative teaching and learning within PHE; addressing the new digital challenges, work based learning, recognition, relevant staff qualifications and development and engagement of stakeholders
- Role of universities of applied sciences in applied R&I, collaboration and enhanced capacity for research and innovation through partnerships and students' engagement in research
- Contribution to regional development in partnership with the world of work (SMEs), regional authorities and other stakeholders, the unique role and potential of universities of applied sciences

The conference will be held prior to the Bologna process Ministerial conference in Paris and will feed into the further discussion on developments of European higher education after 2020.

The 28<sup>th</sup> EURASHE annual conference in Tallinn (Estonia) will be hosted by the Estonian Rectors' Conference of Universities of Applied Sciences (RCUAS) with the support of the Ministry of Education and Research.

### Target groups:

The organisers would like to invite mainly the following groups to join the conference to strengthen diversity of views, mutual learning, discussions and exchange

- Universities of applied sciences' leaders
- Professional Higher Education community

- European businesses and public institutions
- European students' representatives
- Policy makers & researchers

It is also possible to register for only one of the conference days.