



**Harmonising Approaches  
To Professional Higher  
Education In Europe**

Harmonising Approaches to Professional Higher Education  
in Europe / HAPHE

Final Report

Public Part

## Project information

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# Executive Summary

While the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) has contributed significantly to the harmonisation of higher education in Europe, the Professional Higher Education (PHE) sector is still in significant flux. Thus e.g. 'Fachhochschulen' are increasingly becoming Universities of Applied Sciences while traditional universities are increasingly providing professionally-orientated programmes. The wide variety of systems, which now fall under the umbrella term of 'professional' higher education, makes it difficult to transnationally analyse this sector, hinders recognition of qualifications, and limits the ability of soft-policy tools to strengthen its growth.

To address this issue, the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) has put together a consortium of 11 dedicated actors in the field of PHE in Europe, with the intention of strengthening the sector, so as to improve its role as a specific player in interlinking education, labour market, research and innovation. The HAPHE consortium is working on bringing together a group of field experts, who, through a wide consultation with stakeholders from education, business and society, are focusing on Harmonising Approaches to Professional Higher Education in Europe (predominantly at European Qualification Framework (EQF) level 6 and above).

In the first phase of the project, the HAPHE consortium has carried out a wide mapping and surveying of different approaches to the PHE provision throughout EU-member states. It consists of PHE Country Profiles of 15 EU-member states (Denmark, Germany, Malta, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Belgium-Flanders, Netherlands, France, Ireland, Portugal, Poland, Lithuania and Croatia) and an even wider PHE stakeholders' survey with 671 respondents from 17 countries (Austria and the United Kingdom in addition to the original set).

The outcomes of the mapping exercise have been published both as a publication, *Profile of Professional Higher Education in Europe*, and as an online tool on the HAPHE website<sup>1</sup>. The online tool is providing a deep insight into the overall results, as well as overview in each of the countries researched. In this way, the information on the current state of PHE, the outcomes of the interviews, as well as a mapping of outcomes per country are available online.

In the second phase of the project, the HAPHE consortium has been working together with external experts on setting out the definition of PHE as well as defining characteristics of PHE programmes. This has been realised through a series of expert meetings and national stakeholders' interviews in conjunction with a Validation Seminar for EU Stakeholders. The results of this validation phase has provided vast feedback on the first-phase outcomes, and once implemented, the definition and the set of characteristics were ready to undergo a larger validation process.

In the third phase, the project focused on strongly involving stakeholders in all stages (research, design, valorisation) to ensure the group's ability to provide sustainable results by creating a critical mass of consensus, to allow the de-facto adoption of the proposals as a

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<sup>1</sup> <http://haphe.eurashe.eu/>

standard. This large-scale validation process was organised through National Validation Seminars. In total 11 events took place in the following countries: Denmark, Germany, Malta, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Belgium-Flanders, France, Portugal, Poland and Croatia. Around 200 stakeholders attended these events, providing feedback on various levels, and ensuring the overall validation of the work the project had done until that moment. The feedback was in the end adopted by the Expert Group and the final definition and set of characteristics were ready to be published!

In the last phase of the project, partners have focused on collecting best practices in implementing different sets of characteristics of PHE in their institutions and programmes. In parallel, the consortium has worked on policy recommendations for EU and national policy-makers, as well as institutional management.

The project concluded with a Launch Conference in October 2014 in Otocec (Slovenia). The conference gathered 76 participants from 19 countries, and allowed for direct access to the data on PHE and to the results of the consortium's work, including experts' and evidence-based policy inputs. Workshops were structured around the best practices, while the plenary sessions presented the outcomes and worked on policy implications. The input from participants fed into the policy recommendations.

All of the activities within the project lifecycle aimed at clarifying enhancement of a broadly shared understanding of PHE. It allows for the strengthening of the sector as such where policy instruments can be more efficiently used.

By strengthening the PHE sector, and improving the transparency of the PHE provision, the consortium wishes to enhance employability of European higher education as a whole, to contribute towards a more cohesive EHEA, and to support the modernisation of European higher education institutions by encouraging an increase in their responsiveness to enterprise and society.

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# 1. Project Objectives

The overall aim of the project was to Harmonise Approaches to Professional Higher Education in Europe, so as to reinforce the role of PHE within the overall higher education provision, and to better interconnect education, the labour market, research and innovation.

This goal was addressed by building a consensus around developing a definition of PHE and a set of characteristics of PHE programmes while developing policies, implementation guides and support tools for strengthening of that sector in a sustainable manner.

In particular, the project aimed at:

- improving the set of data on PHE in Europe in order to obtain an in-depth and comparable insight into the state of art of the sector;
- sharing expertise among stakeholders in education, enterprise and civil society on PHE understanding, definition and defined characteristics;
- setting up a framework for better monitoring and evidence-based decision-making for PHE as a sector by developing a roadmap for the improvement and harmonisation of PHE institutions and PHE indicators for policy makers;
- providing support to peer-learning among PHE institutions through guidelines and implementation tools on best practice in PHE;
- gaining broad consensus for the project's innovations among the wider education community by embarking upon extensive stakeholder's consultation to validate the project's outcomes;
- disseminating widely the project's results, including specific publications, stakeholder events and a purpose-organised final conference.

## 2. Project Approach

The HAPHE project is divided into seven workpackages. The first four workpackages (WP1-WP4) follow in chronological order and build on each other's outcomes; the remaining three workpackages (WP5-WP7) run simultaneously due to their nature and aim to contribute to one or more of the projects objectives.

Title	Type	Objectives
WP1 Mapping Professional Higher Education in Europe	Implementation	Survey the various definitions and practices of PHE/advanced vocational education in Europe Create a typology of PHE provision across Europe Identify the main actors involved in PHE at European level Provide an evidence-base for the characterisation of PHE in WP2
WP2 Characterising Professional Higher Education	Implementation	Capture and represent the views and attitudes of a wide range of stakeholders towards PHE Propose a definition, framed as a set of defining characteristics of PHE Elucidate quality criteria for each defined characteristic of PHE
WP3 Consensus Building through Validation	Implementation	Validate the proposals made by the expert group in WP2 Achieve a critical mass of supporting opinion-leaders to jump-start adoption Identify challenges for implementation of the quality criteria at organisational and systemic levels
WP4 Fostering Development of PHE as a sector	Exploitation of results	Publish a definition and a set of defining characteristics for the PHE Sector Propose implementation measures for PHE quality best practices Enable the use of soft legislative tools to stimulate the PHE sector as a whole
WP5 Message Management	Dissemination	Formulate and effectively communicate the project's brand, identity and message to relevant stakeholders Coordinate and monitor the implementation of the consortium's dissemination strategy Provide creative and technical support to the partners in their dissemination activities Coordinate centralised dissemination action
WP6 Quality & Evaluation	Quality Assurance (quality plan)	Ensure process and product quality Forecast and mitigate risks to project

Title	Type	Objectives
Management		continuity Foster a quality culture amongst the consortium Check outputs against plans
WP7 Consortium Coordination	Management	Ensure project deliverables are delivered on time Monitor risks and analyse project milestones Ensure smooth day to day running of the consortium Manage communication within the consortium and between the consortium and the Commission

### **WP1 – Mapping Professional Higher Education in Europe**

The initial plan, as presented in the project application, has set out the goals of a brief data collection on the state of PHE in identified countries, leading to a harmonised approach to PHE in Europe, through an agreed validation process of PHE definitions and characteristics within a wide range of stakeholders. This aims at strengthening and harmonising the position of PHE in Europe.

Yet, while following this very logical approach, the complexity of the actual situation of PHE within the higher education landscape has significantly altered the process. The diversification of higher education institutions is increasing the complexity of the entire topic we are tackling. Thus, among many ‘traditional’ PHE institutions, an academic drift is being observed, (‘Fachhochschulen’ becoming Universities of Applied Sciences), while on the other hand, a trend to provide professionally-orientated/practically-orientated study programmes (e.g. theoretical physicists promote ‘econophysics’) is becoming popular among ‘traditional’ academic institutions. At the same time, there are many higher education systems which are making a distinction between ‘academic’ and ‘practical’ study programmes. Last but not least, discussions continue in Europe with regards to professional masters, professional doctorates and even ‘professors of practice’.

The HAPHE consortium started its work in October 2012 by working on the development of the PHE Country Profiles. After the first steps, it became clear that the idea of working on the harmonisation of PHE requires involving more experts into the work considering the complexity of the current state of PHE in Europe. The diversity of systems, programmes, and curricula offered even among the 15 countries in focus showed that the entire work of the consortium will have to be done through a much wider approach. All of this was identified as needed in order to meet the final goals of the HAPHE project.

Therefore, one of the first modifications to the work plan was the separation of the research between objective and subjective data collection. The objective side included desk research on the current state of PHE in different countries, developed by a team of researchers, under the supervision of each of the partners for the appointed countries. The objective data gathered includes mostly national legislation, laws, types of higher education institutions,

EQF levels and its legal implications on PHE. Following that, the final result was presented to the authorities of specific countries in question (through BFUG members, government representatives, rectors etc.) for a final approval.

In order to grasp the situation as a whole, an additional outlook had to be added in the form of the stakeholders' views (subjective data collection). Therefore an additional pan-European survey on the stakeholders' views was carried out to gather all necessary information as to the state of play of PHE in Europe. After a long period promoting the survey, we have reached 671 responses from 17 countries. These have been evaluated and, together with the desk research, included in the final publication *Profile of Professional Higher Education in Europe*. Additionally, detailed country information profiles have been made available in the online tool on the HAPHE website. The main research findings from the first phase are also available at the end of this report in section 7.

This publication is the core material upon which the work for the rest of the project was built. The first large promotion event was the EURASHE seminar on the Implementation of Internal and External Quality Assurance and the meeting of the council of EURASHE, held on 24-25 and 26 October 2013 respectively in Bucharest (Romania). The HAPHE publication was officially launched on this occasion.

## **WP2 – Characterising Professional Higher Education**

One of the outcomes of a deeper and wider analysis of PHE in WP1 has been the apparent need for a more expert-driven WP2. As the stakeholders have been widely consulted on the development stage within WP1, the next step was to consolidate different views and include the input of experts to arrive at a first draft of a definition and characteristics of PHE. After these steps had taken place, national stakeholders were consulted. Therefore WP2 started with an adapted work plan.

This phase consisted of incorporating the findings into the experts' discussion in order to characterise professional higher education in Europe and bring forward a definition which would include the views of the PHE sector from a variety of countries.

In September 2013, Expert Group was established, with their first meeting taking place on 9 September in Stuttgart (Germany). This was the first in a series of drafting workshops aiming at establishing a European definition for professional higher education. To ensure the high level expert view within the larger context, besides the six consortium experts, two external experts on European higher education have been invited to contribute to the discussion: Guy Haug (France) and Jiří Nantl (Czech Republic). During the full day workshop, following the presentation and stocktaking on the Europe-wide PHE surveys, suggestions on an initial set of PHE characteristics have been put forward. Characteristics on the institutional level were also discussed. The workshop concluded by starting discussions on the potential qualitative features of PHE characteristics using a diversity matrix.

The second meeting of the HAPHE Expert Group on PHE, held on 12 November 2013 in Stuttgart (Germany), focused on further developing the above mentioned concepts and discuss possible development of quality criteria. External experts have joined the meeting as well: Ann Verreth (Belgium) and Regitze Kristensen (Denmark). At this stage, it was identified that developing quality criteria linked to the characteristics would be a very

extensive task that was not in the capacity of the consortium, taking into account the time constraints. At the same time, it has been acknowledged that a new project has started called PHEExcel / Testing the Feasibility of a Quality Label for Professional Higher Education Excellence. The project where both EURASHE as a coordinator and Ms Regitze Kristensen are involved, is considered as a sister project of HAPHE, and as focused of quality of PHE, will build upon HAPHE outcomes in order to research deeper in the field of quality criteria of PHE programmes.

The final meeting of the Expert Group took place on 11 December 2013 in Prague (Malta), where the expert group had to propose the definition and a set of characteristics, to be adopted the next day by the HAPHE Consortium. Experts at this meeting were Michael Gabel (Germany) and Richard Thorn (Ireland). At this last meeting, the Expert Group received feedback from the Consortium based on stakeholder interviews. Each of the partners had organised face-to-face interviews with various stakeholders in order to reflect on the enhanced maturity model drafted by the whole consortium in their respective countries.

### **WP3 – Consensus Building through Validation**

The purpose of WP3 was to validate the proposals made by the expert group in WP2, and to achieve a critical mass of supporting opinion-leaders to jump-start adoption and identify challenges for implementing the definition and developed characteristics at organisational and systemic levels. WP3 was launched at a HAPHE partner meeting on 12 December 2013 in Prague (Czech Republic). The first step was to organise a Validation Seminar for EU Stakeholder in conjunction with the smaller Stakeholder Focus Group-Expert Group and Stakeholder Views towards PHE. This event gathered 19 EU stakeholders and experts in the field of higher education, in order to validate the draft *Definition and Characteristics of Professional Higher Education*.

Following this event, 11 additional National Validation Seminars took place between March and June 2014. Each partner held a seminar inviting different groups of stakeholders, in order to receive feedback from the national perspective. Seminars took place in Denmark, Germany, Malta, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Belgium-Flanders, France, Portugal, Poland and Croatia. Around 200 participants attended these Seminars and provided a large-scale feedback on the definition and set of characteristics. Reports of these events, including the EU Validation Seminar, were compiled into the Validation Report, which highlighted the consensus opinions of the stakeholders, as well as areas of significant dissent, using these to make recommendations on improving the defining characteristics and quality criteria. The Validation Report served as a basis for work package 4.

### **WP4 – Fostering Development of PHE as a sector**

The aim of WP4 was to publish a final set of definition and characteristics in the *Report on Definition and Characteristics of Professional Higher Education*, to propose implementation measures for PHE quality best practices and to enable the use of soft legislative tools to stimulate the PHE sector as a whole.

The Expert Group meeting has been organised again, this time in Brussels (Belgium) on 27 June 2014, in order to assess the validation report and this way finalise the work on *Definition*

*and Characteristics of PHE*. Following an intensive work which included almost 100 pages of feedback, the Expert Group presented the final outcome to the HAPHE consortium for their approval. By the end of June 2014, the HAPHE project has presented to the wider audience the definition and set of characteristics of Professional Higher Education in Europe.

The second part of work package 4 focused on the implementation reports. *Implementation report for Professional Higher Education Institutions* is intended to support the institutions in applying the characteristics to their institutions and programmes, by providing best practices. Therefore, the consortium gathered these examples, coming from institutional level with vast experience in the field, and after assessing their quality and relevance, the implementation report was published.

In parallel, a small working group started preparing the *Implementation report for policy-makers* – policy recommendations for national and European policy makers, as well as for institutional management.

On 16 and 17 October 2014, HAPHE organised its Launch Conference in Otocec (Slovenia). With 76 participants from 19 countries, the partnership organised the programme in order to present the project and its outcomes to a wider audience. While the plenary sessions focused on presentations of the outcomes, panel discussions focused on the policy implications. Workshops were, however, developed around the best practices, in order to train participants in applying those in their institutions and programmes.

Final input from the Conference was gathered in order to further feed into the policy recommendations. At the very end, the partnership created the final publication – *Professional Higher Education in Europe – Characteristics, practice examples and national differences*. This publication gathers the outcomes of the HAPHE project, including the research outcomes on the current state of PHE across Europe, outcomes of the stakeholders' survey, the proposed definition and set of characteristics, and implementation reports for PHE institutions and policy-makers. In this way, we have created a publication which captures the picture of the current development of PHE in Europe and can serve as basis for further work on harmonisation or development of each of the specific fields.

## **WP5 – Message Management**

The aims of WP5 are set to formulate and effectively communicate the project's brand, identity and message to relevant stakeholders; coordinate and monitor the implementation of the consortium's dissemination strategy; provide creative and technical support to the partners in their dissemination activities and coordinate centralised dissemination actions.

To reach these aims, a multitude of techniques and outcomes were used throughout the lifetime of the project. Key messages on PHE definition and characteristics addressed at the main stakeholders have been defined within the first year of the project, with the help of the entire consortium, and are used in all dissemination and exploitation activities.

The WP leader ensured that centralised materials such as the website, social media and brochures also reflect these messages.

The HAPHE dissemination plan was developed to monitor and coordinate the procedure for dissemination activities. The dissemination plan detailed the target groups, identifying the

key messages which are to be used to characterise the project's dissemination activities. It is a tool to assist each partner in defining a dissemination plan for their own activities, facilitate the coordination of joint dissemination activities between partners and lay down protocols for monitoring, tracking and recording of dissemination activities.

Furthermore, a HAPHE project website (<http://haphe.eurashe.eu>) has been developed and maintained to provide a portal to all the project's activities and results including: aims, objectives and activities of the project; characteristics of the partnership; project news; reporting of the events; downloads of all public deliverables; examples of best-practice; links to related resources and more. The website includes advanced analytics to allow for detailed monitoring of target groups. The online tool of the PHE Country Profile is also available on the website. This website will continue to run and will be updated and additionally developed, as one of the sustainability commitments of the partnership.

The brand identity has been developed and the first publication has been launched in printing in October 2013, and the final book in October 2014. Through the project, a continuous support to partners was provided with necessary materials as well as online tools needed for the further promotion of the project, functioning of the consortium and gathering of the materials.

The project message was continuously developed and promoted. Presentation of findings at events was one of the strategic activities that ensured a large-scale impact for the outcomes on the extensive research of the PHE landscape in Europe and its state of the art, as well as the work on the definition and a set of characteristics which were to be validated. This includes presentations at events and conferences, meetings, workshops, symposia, scientific and information 'days', either organised by other associations or by the promoters of the project.

Finally, to ensure the proper impact of all of the dissemination activities, an inherent part of WP5 was the Impact Audit. The impact assessment report intended to give the consortium an idea of the effectiveness of the dissemination activities which have been embarked upon by the consortium over the lifetime of the project. The impact audit has shown the continuous growth in the reach of the project. This came as a result of constant increase of the activities where stakeholders were involved, finishing with the final conference. In the final round of promotional activities, the most important outcomes were linked to the conference announcement and distributed to more than 10.000 stakeholders.

## **WP6 – Quality & Evaluation Management**

The purpose of WP6 was to ensure process and product quality, forecast and mitigate risks to project continuity, foster a quality culture among the consortium and check outputs against plans.

HAPHE partners developed firstly the Evaluation & Quality Plan that served the purposes of quality assurance within the project. The quality plan described the organisation, the structure, the general rules and the standards to be maintained, while the evaluation part described the conceptual framework of the evaluation: purposes, objects, actors and tools to be used during evaluation activities.

The main evaluation principles were:

- integrating formative as well as summative approaches to the evaluation: the formative approach means to accompany the development of the project and suggest changes whenever a problem can be identified during the work by means of evaluation or whenever an opportunity of improvement is identified through evaluation; the summative approach is focused on measuring if the expected objectives have been achieved and an impact has been produced;
- taking into account the consortium partners' perspective: product outputs designed and validated through a participative process involving consortium partners;
- flexibility and feasibility: the approach to the evaluation should be flexible to accommodate for partners with different level of engagements, minimise the formalities while receiving open and relevant feedback;
- accompanying with guidelines and instructions: hence the evaluation of outputs was distributed among partners, the tools were accompanied by guidelines to allow any evaluator to understand the aims and the way the tools have to be used.

The following table matches the evaluation objectives and the different work packages:

<b>Object</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Schedule</b>
WP1 Mapping PHE in Europe	Complexity and clarity of the desk-top research Complexity of stakeholders' analysis Clarity and relevance of analysis, country reports and summarising analytical report Clarity and relevance of the PHE typology Quality and clarity of templates and forms Relevance of methods and approaches Accumulated literature (articles, papers of various types, books), accumulated knowledge sources besides literature, importance, usability	During the implementation of the project and at the end of the workpackage
WP 2 Characterising PHE	Number and quality of data sets (survey target 750 answers, balanced division between stakeholders) Quality and clarity of survey forms Complexity and relevance of proposed PHE definition and characteristics Scope of engagement of stakeholders, consulting events at EU and national levels Quality and relevance of feedback from stakeholders Involvement of relevant external experts	During the implementation of the project and at the end of the workpackage
WP3 Consensus Building through Validation	Engagement and relevance of stakeholders at EU and national level (number of participants, their expertise and representativeness, contribution...) Relevance of conclusions and comments on	During the implementation of the project and at the end of the workpackage

Object	Criteria	Schedule
	<p>the project outcomes – long-term impact reflection in EHEA policies, recognition of the project outcomes (definitions, typology,, characteristics)</p> <p>Number of consulting events at EU and national levels</p> <p>Contribution and relevance of national validation conclusions</p> <p>Complexity and relevance of the validation report</p>	
<p>WP4 Fostering of PHE as a Sector</p>	<p>Clarity and relevance of PHE characteristics and quality criteria</p> <p>Acceptance of proposed characteristics and quality criteria at EU and national levels</p> <p>Complexity, clarity and relevance of the implementation report and its acceptance as guidelines</p> <p>Complexity and clarity for the implementation report for the policy makers</p> <p>Distribution and acceptance of the reports</p> <p>Contribution, commitment and relevance of external experts within Expert Group meetings (links to EHEA policies and tools)</p> <p>Attendance of the conference (target 100 representatives of PHE institutions and stakeholders)</p> <p>Feedback from conference participants</p>	<p>During the implementation of the project and at the end of the project</p> <p>A post-project review after the project cycle in 2015</p>
<p>WP5 Message Management</p>	<p>Clear dissemination plan</p> <p>Website is functioning and regularly updated with the relevant content use (frequency) and relevance of the content on the website</p> <p>Compliance of the dissemination materials with the project corporate identity</p> <p>Clarity and relevance of dissemination materials</p> <p>Contributions and commitment of partners</p> <p>Presentation of the project at EU and national level (quantity of events, relevance)</p> <p>Impact of the project</p>	<p>During the implementation of the project and at the end of the project</p>
<p>WP6 Quality and Evaluation Management</p>	<p>Quality and Evaluation Plan</p> <p>Quality of the project being agenda of the meetings</p> <p>Contribution to the WP plans and products, compliance with the quality policy</p> <p>Status reports delivered, peer reviews performed and the outcomes taken into</p>	<p>During the implementation of the project and at the end of the project</p>

Object	Criteria	Schedule
	account External review performed successfully Relevance of adopted indicators	
WP7 Consortium Coordination	Perception of the added value of the outputs and results of project including learning among partners Correspondence between foreseen objectives and obtained results Relevance of the planned activities and the identified needs and priorities Relevance of the activities with reference to the identified needs and priorities Relevance and timing of the tasks fulfilled Efficiency and working methods Efficiency of the communication system Systematisation of the results Cost-efficiency of project activities Coherence and contribution of the partnership	During the implementation of the project and at the end of the project

HAPHE status reports were produced by the WP leader. These documents summarised the outcomes of the evaluation measures conducted within the HAPHE project over the 25 months of the project's duration within the framework of the HAPHE Quality & Evaluation Plan.

The main conclusions that can be withdrawn are:

- the project was of high importance for mapping PHE within the changing context in Europe, to have a potential to influence policy discussions – also due to the engagement of a vast number of partners from different countries and EURASHE as their representative on European level;
- the project addressed an interesting topic, attracting a number of other peers and partners from stakeholder groups (students, world of work). The potential to open a discussion on the topic is definitely high in most of the participating countries;
- the project has delivered expected outcomes, while at the same time facing a number of difficulties as concerns the comprehension of the subject to focus on PHE, different perceptions by the partners and different perceptions of the sector across the researched countries;
- there was trust into the capability of the consortium to perform the tasks, especially when having an opportunity to invite outstanding external experts – according to the profiles and principles set in advance;
- the management of the project is quite open and participative.

Moreover, the project involved an external reviewer – Richard Thorn (Ireland), an expert who has attended some of HAPHE events, and with his vast experience in both higher education

and the project management, provided the consortium with a review of their performance, both on the content and operational level. This was seen as an excellent exercise, since it gave partners an insight for further development as well as for adjusting future approaches to such matters. The overall report was marked very well and further stressed the success of the project.

### **WP7 – Consortium Coordination**

To ensure quality of project management, WP7 focused on the general coordination and daily management of the consortium. The general administration and the financial reporting were done by the lead partner. The lead partner was responsible for timely reporting to the EACEA and for the smooth transfer of intermediate results to the other partners. EURASHE closely involved with each lead partner of the other WPs in the preparation of seminars or other meetings between participants. EURASHE organised all meetings both physical and virtual and was responsible for the external communication. The general outline of the HAPHE project was guarded by the consortium as whole.

#### Monitoring Approach:

The coordinator held the responsibility for monitoring the overall progress towards the project objectives. Formal monitoring took place in terms of the quality and evaluation reports, as well as reporting of dissemination activities. In addition, the project coordinator maintained a control tool of progress towards outputs, which was updated according to input from the partners given at meetings and through other communication. Due to the frequency of meetings and the relative high volume of traffic in communication, this approach was sufficient to be able to identify delays in any deliverable. In case of such delays, the coordinator immediately asked the partner(s) involved to suggest remedial action, and assess the actions against the project objectives. The suggestions of the partner(s) were either confirmed or modified based upon this assessment.

#### Management meetings:

The main tool for coordinating the work of the project has been the HAPHE partner meetings. During these management meetings, the progress of the project was discussed workpackage by workpackage. Any deviations from plans were reported at these meetings, and solutions were found. Furthermore, an evaluation session of the progress achieved so far was held during each meeting. During the final session of each meeting, the coordinator presented a work plan for the coming weeks, based on the discussions approved and then implemented by the partners.

In total 27 meetings took place, including: 7 physical partner meetings (5 partner meetings with the entire consortium: kick-off meeting, mid-term partner meeting, extraordinary partner meeting in Prague linked to adjustments of the work plan, final partner meeting, and pre-conference meeting; 2 partner meetings with part of the consortium); 5 meetings of the HAPHE Expert Group on PHE (3 under WP2 and 2 under WP4); 15 virtual meetings using an online collaborative meeting tool.

### **3. Project Outcomes & Results**

While the first year of the project was dedicated mainly to surveying European PHE and the preparation of the first drafts of the PHE definition and characteristics, the second year focused on extensive work of the expert group developing the definition of PHE and a set of characteristics. Large scale validation took place in order to ensure outcomes which represent the real picture of PHE in Europe. Finally, implementation reports for institutions and policy-makers were presented in order to ensure follow-up of the project and effectiveness of the results, further stimulating harmonisation of PHE across European countries.

#### **Profile of Professional Higher Education in Europe**

The main outcome of the first year of the HAPHE project is therefore certainly the extensive research that was carried out throughout the EU on both subjective and objective features of PHE to map the very complex European PHE landscape.

This report on the state of PHE in Europe contains the first part of the work conducted by the HAPHE consortium, namely the outcomes of our activities aiming at Mapping Professional Higher Education in Europe. The first part with PHE profiles in Europe provides the most extensive survey of PHE in particular to date (671 respondents from 17 countries). It is completed with national profiles of 15 EU-member states, specifically: Denmark, Germany, Malta, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Belgium-Flanders, Netherlands, France, Ireland, Portugal, Poland, Lithuania and Croatia. Based on a standardised template, the PHE Country Profiles describe the nature of provision and characteristics of PHE in each of the 15 surveyed countries. The second part with a Typology of PHE in Europe proposes cross-country comparisons, as well as identifies similarities and proposes a typology for classification of the different systems.

The report on *Profile of Professional Higher Education in Europe* is available in printed copies, in PDF format and is also distributed as an e-book. Moreover an interactive web tool was developed to allow for direct access to the data and results of the consortium's work. This web tool will continuously be updated after the end of HAPHE in order to provide up to date information, and possibly extend the profile to new countries.

This publication is the core material on which the work of the second part of the project was built. The first large promotion event was the EURASHE seminar on the Implementation of Internal and External Quality Assurance and the meeting of the council of EURASHE, held on 24-25 and 26 October 2013 respectively in Bucharest (Romania). The HAPHE publication was officially launched on this occasion.

#### **Characterising PHE in Europe: PHE definition and set of Characteristics**

A set of 5 Expert Group meetings, bringing as well external experts to the project, worked on preparing the definition and set of characteristics of PHE. After the first result presented in the progress report, a large scale validation took place. Partners have organised face-to-face

stakeholder interviews, an EU validation seminar took place in Brussels and 11 National Validation Seminars were organised across Europe. This gathered more than 200 participants into reviewing the outcomes of WP2 and finally delivered a Validation report. The Validation report was assessed by the Expert Group, delivering the final outcome: Definition and Characteristics of PHE in Europe.

### **Scope, context, principles**

The higher education landscape throughout Europe has changed dramatically over the past few decades. In order to respond to societal, technological and cultural developments higher education has moved from being elite to mass to universal. It has substantially diversified in terms of access of different age cohorts studying in different ways at a variety of levels of advancement and a variety of institutions. Yet, the purposes of higher education still remain largely those defined by the Council of Europe's 'four purposes' of higher education: "preparation for sustainable employment, personal development, preparing students for active citizenship, and creating a broad advanced knowledge base and stimulating research and innovation" .

There has appeared a diversity of different but equally recognised approaches to the way in which these tenets of the Council of Europe's 'four purposes' are implemented by different institutions providing a wide range of institutional missions, values, objectives and provisions in terms of curriculum design and delivery, levels of qualifications, research, development and community engagement. More emphasis is placed towards responsiveness to the societal requirements, employability characteristics amongst graduates, as well as enhancing the role of higher education within the life-long learning concept and affiliation with corresponding structures. In the recent period higher education systems have witnessed blurring the borders amongst formerly set types of higher education institutions. Despite the diversity of approaches at every level of higher education, the issue of quality remains central if all the different types of higher education are to remain different but equal to the various stakeholders.

EURASHE is concerned with higher education that is avowedly focused on the preparation of graduates for a smooth integration into the world of work, research that is market oriented/user inspired and community engagement that is deeply rooted in the communities (local, regional, national or international), whether provided at the institutional, faculty or department level. The following definition and specific, key characteristics should serve as guidelines to better understanding this particular type of higher education, respecting its mission, integration within higher education systems and promote its development and evaluation irrespective of the institutional background and provisions.

## Definition of Professional Higher Education (PHE)

***Professional Higher Education is a form of Higher Education that offers a particularly intense integration with the world of work in all its aspects, including teaching, learning, research and governance and at all levels of the overarching Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area.***

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*Its function is to diversify learning opportunities, enhance the employability of graduates, offer qualifications and stimulate innovation, for the benefit of learners and society.*

*The world of work includes all enterprises, civil society organisations, and the public sector. The intensity of integration with the world of work is manifested by a strong focus on the application of learning achievements. This approach involves combining phases of work and study, a concern for employability, cooperation with employers, the use of practice-relevant knowledge and use-inspired research.*

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## PHE Characteristics Framework

The framework supplements the definition by clarifying how the professional nature of HE expresses itself through various characteristics of Higher Education. The characteristics do not attempt to describe a professional HEI, but rather are applicable to units of education, most typically courses or programmes within HE.

The framework is made up of three variables:

- **Characteristic:** this is simply the name of the indicator
- **Description:** this merely describes what is meant by the indicator
- **Core Criterion:** This sets out the minimum requirement the educational experience must adhere to, so as to be considered professional higher education.

Characteristic	Description	Core Criterion
<b>Policy and Strategy</b>		
<i>How is PHE embedded and represented in the overall policies and strategic framework of higher education institutions?</i>		
<b>Policy and Strategy Integration</b>	Integration of the world of work into policies and strategic framework	Institutional policies and strategies are defined in collaboration with the world of work.
<b>Objectives and Outcomes</b>	Main objectives in relation to the outcome of PHE	PHE specifically focuses on enhancing job related skills and competencies with a view to raising the employability of students.  The emphasis is on learning outcomes and use-inspired research.
<b>Regional Integration</b>	Engagement with its regions and contribution to their development	PHE is strongly embedded in regional partnerships with the world of work.

Characteristics	Description	Core Criteria
<b>Teaching and Learning</b>		
<i>How is teaching and learning influenced through the specific characteristics of PHE?</i>		
<b>Methods of Curriculum Development</b>	The process of design and development of: - learning outcomes - curricula - methods of learning and assessment	Curricula are developed by academia in collaboration with stakeholders, in particular from the world of work, taking into account the future needs of the practice and context of employment.
<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	What a learner is expected to know, understand and be able to do as the result of a process of learning	The learning outcomes reflect essential knowledge, skills and attitudes related to the specific professional requirements, but should not be limited to this.  In addition, students acquire professional and life skills which enable them to act successfully, in an innovative and self-organised way in a changing work environment.  The involvement of students in research, development and innovation activities leads them to better professional practice.
<b>Content for Teaching and Learning</b>	The content comprises: - syllabus and other materials - practice examples - working methods	The learning content is productively integrating theory and practice as the basis for complex problem-solving in real work situations.  The content is informed by the latest research, trends and references from both the world of work and academia.
<b>Learning Methodology</b>	The learning methodology comprises: - the learning design - the assessments needed to achieve the learning outcomes	The learning methodology comprises methods of active, collaborative and self-organised learning and while focusing on experience based learning methods including but not limited to simulation based learning (SBL), scenario based learning (SceBL), problem based learning (PBL), or any other authentic learning situations.

		Both formative and summative assessments should reflect the nature and methodology of the specific PHE learning environment.
<b>Learning Environment</b>	The surroundings and conditions in which learning takes place	The learning environment includes experience within Institutions as well as outside, in the world of work.  Significant practice phases and/or job experiences serve to reflect theory in a practical context.
<b>Programme Team</b>	All persons involved in the design, delivery and assessment of learning, including visiting lecturers, professionals and support staff	At the programme level, the team shows a combination of academic background and relevant experience from the world of work.

Characteristics	Description	Core Criteria
<b>Research, Development and Innovation (RDI)</b>		
<i>How are RDI integrated as part of a sustainable PHE, recognising that they might differ from level to level?</i>		
<b>RDI Agenda</b>	The scope of the RDI activity	The RDI agenda is informed by the world of work in order to meet the needs of society and of the world of work.
<b>RDI Process</b>	The way RDI meets the needs of society and the world of work	Researchers seek and provide input from and to the world of work and value stakeholders' requests and contributions.  The RDI process respects the nature of the inputs and can include various types of research activities and scholarship.
<b>RDI Outputs and Outcomes</b>	The expected result of RDI	RDI outcomes aim to be relevant to the world of work, and society. In addition to traditional outputs, such as licenses, patents and publications, RDI outcomes are solution-oriented with tangible benefits for the world of work and society.

### **Implementation Report for PHE Institutions**

In order to support the development of PHE as a sector as well as further support its harmonisation, *Implementation report for PHE institutions* was created. Based on the set of characteristics developed within WP2, the three framework dimension policy & strategy, teaching & learning and research, development & innovation are accompanied by examples of professional higher education from several European countries. Those examples were gathered from programmes and institutions which have developed a clear professional profile in all or most of the framework criteria. This gives as well an overview of how PHE is embedded and represented in the overall policies and strategic framework of PHE. After gathering more than 60 cases, the expert group selected 40 best practice examples and showcased them in a separate report (online) and in the final publication. These served as well as a basis for developing workshops at the Launch Conference. This report can be found online.

## **Policy Recommendation**

Taking into account the momentum 2015 has in higher education, linked to the Conference of Ministers in charge of Higher Education of the European Higher Education Area taking place in May 2015 in Yerevan (Armenia), policy recommendations are a crucial output to be used as a dissemination tool and advocacy input. Therefore, policy recommendations were drafted by a working group and approved by the consortium, also ensuring sustainability of project's results and further stimulate the harmonisation process of PHE as a sector.

Policy recommendations are gathered in a document entitled *Implementation report for policy makers* and contain following:

### **Recommendations to EU policy makers**

#### **Key Finding: Professional Higher Education is a specific form of Higher Education, with its own characteristics**

All countries participating in the HAPHE study make a distinction between academic and professional higher education in their legislations. PHE is at the centre of the triangle of education, knowledge creation and services to community, having distinguishing characteristics when compared to traditional academic HE in terms of policy & strategy, teaching & learning as well as research, development & innovation. The existence of distinctive PHE programmes increases the offer of learning pathways in higher education, improving quality and student choice.

#### **Key finding: The lack of key data on PHE hinders the exchange of good practice on challenges particular to PHE and evidence-based policy-making.**

PHE can contribute to solving (societal) challenges – in particular those related to employability - and the HAPHE framework will support further growth in the quality of design, provision and governance. This aim, however, is challenged by lack of reliable and comparable key data, especially at European level. For this study, our data collection relied on a number of national studies with different foci and consultation sessions with experts. Studies on the implementation of the Bologna Process as well as on the E&T 2020 programme do not recognise the differing roles of the various forms of Higher Education, and thus do not provide specific data on the contribution of PHE.

At European level, it is currently hard to impossible to determine

- the impact of legislative changes on PHE for society and the labour market, and
- the success of PHE institutional or programme approaches for graduates' success, student mobility and career progress.

#### **Recommendation: Adapt research on the EHEA to be sensitive to the contributions of different forms of HE towards overall policy goals.**

Bologna implementation studies and EURYDICE reports on higher education should pay attention to PHE being a distinct stream within HE. Policy decisions on professional higher education should be supported by in depth, sector-specific analysis enforced by data-sets

measuring public expenditure, mobility, completion rates, transition from PHE to work, the use of Bologna tools, provision of study modes other than full-time, and issues linked to the social dimension.

**Recommendation: Stimulate exchange of good practice on teaching & learning in PHE, engaging with the world of work**

This report presents a picture of a highly diversified PHE sector, with various different models of integration with the world of work, as well as systems of widely varying maturity. For this reason, there is considerable scope for trans-national good practice exchange in the area of professional teaching and learning. Areas of particular focus for such exchange include the efficient involvement of employers in curriculum development and assessment, successful pedagogies/learning methodologies in PHE and the organisation of practice-learning phases. Furthermore, we recommend to stimulate exchange on the development of balanced PHE programme teams with academic skills and up-to-date knowledge from the world of work.

**Recommendations to national policy-makers**

**Key finding: Barriers to transition between Professional Higher Education (PHE) and Academic Higher Education (AHE) are commonplace**

The Berlin Communiqué states that “Within such frameworks, degrees should have different defined outcomes. First and second cycle degrees should have different orientations and various profiles in order to accommodate a diversity of individual, academic and labour market needs. First cycle degrees should give access, in the sense of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, to second cycle programmes. Second cycle degrees should give access to doctoral studies.”

This study finds that the transition from PHE to AHE (and vice-versa) is not necessarily automatic or easy in many countries and scenarios. While in some countries, transition is possible after attending short focused bridging courses, in others bridging programmes are so intense – often being a full year in length - as to effectively be a full intermediate cycle, whose completion is required to gain access to the next AHE level. In some countries it is impossible to transfer between level 7 of PHE to level 8 of AHE within the EQF. This situation is further complicated in cases of trans-national recognition, with students having no guarantee that initial cycle PHE can be used for access to the next level of AHE across Europe.

**Recommendation: Equivalence between AHE and PHE Qualifications should be guaranteed by law**

PHE programmes naturally aim for employability of their graduates. Nevertheless, a holder of a professional degree should be allowed to transfer to the next cycle of AHE in line with the Berlin Communiqué. Limited access to further studies (especially in countries where PHE provision is provided only at EQF levels 5 and 6) is an argument against pursuing PHE. An academic master can enrich competencies gained during a professional bachelor and still lead to a professional career.

Hence, we recommend that legislation be enacted guaranteeing access, in the sense of the Lisbon Recognition Convention between EQF levels, even between modes of education.

Where institutions require bridging courses, these should be offered in parallel to academic studies and not go beyond building general scientific competencies and specific knowledge needed to master an academic programme.

**Key finding: Applied, practice-led research is limited due to policy barriers**

The HAPHE study shows that the engagement of PHE in more applied, practice-led research is growing in countries across Europe. Stakeholder consultations during the development of the HAPHE guidelines confirm that research at PHE institutions is usually guided by questions arising from professional practice, through exchange with the world of work or regional stakeholders with the aim to achieve a change in professional practice or commercialise a product. Good practice examples exist demonstrating how PHE successfully engages with the world of work and the society when setting agendas for research, development and innovation and shaping their processes and outputs.

However, only a few countries give PHE the same access to public research funding as academic institutions. Base funding for research from the government has been introduced only in the Netherlands. The majority of countries report few competitive funding programmes or that PHE providers are in a disadvantaged situation for obtaining grants. Most research in PHE is financed through industry.

This creates a situation where regions with large business which can afford to finance collaborative research with PHE institutions enter a virtuous positive feedback cycle where the research strengthens the business which in turn strengthens the PHE institutions, while regions without such a business-industry link remain laggards in PHE-supported research innovation.

**Recommendation: Recognise the untapped research profile and value of research outputs of PHE**

National policies should recognise that applied and practice-led research has become part of the mission of PHE institutions and programmes, even in countries where no legal framework exists for PHE to do so. “Applied and practice-based research are not methodologically depleted forms of research, rather they can be innovatory modes of research that cater for a different set of needs and define quality in terms of wider social robustness” (Furlong & Oancea, p.9) . It results in different outputs from traditional research, such as usable products, publications in professional magazines, (in-service) trainings for business and patents. Applied/practice-guided research is thus of significant importance to the overall economy and knowledge society.

**Recommendation: Remove national funding barriers for applied and practice-led research conducted by PHE institutions**

Mechanisms to fund academic research vary a lot between countries, and it is beyond the scope of this document to judge the success of each. However, we recommend European countries scan for structural barriers in making funding available for applied and practice-led research conducted in the frame of PHE and remove them. Barriers might entail

1. linking direct public funding to outcomes of research assessment with high weights for classical academic outcomes, e.g. relying on bibliometrics, or implicitly making the outcome of such an assessment a requirement for obtaining funding from research councils through competitive bids.

2. limiting access to public grants to institutions that have obtained the status of a “research” institution requiring from PHE institutions to develop such a capacity first while relying on industry-sponsorship for research only

To address the first point, we recommend considering assessing research capacity based on indicators which are more in line with the mission of PHE, in consultation with the appropriate stakeholder representatives for the sector.

With respect to the second, we recommend to grant PHE providers the opportunity to apply for competitive public funding programmes, which should subsequently evaluate the research capacity and quality on the basis of each individual proposal (instead of assessing entire institutions).

### **Recommendations to associations representing PHE**

#### **Recommendation: Launch a transnational study in all EHEA countries to gather educational key data on PHE**

With reference to the lack of reliable and comparable data on PHE as specific form of higher education . We recommend to run a large-scale study in all EHEA countries, starting with an assessment of the national capacities and existing data and proposals how those can be efficiently interlinked with a transnational effort.

The study should complement efforts undertaken on the European level and produce comparable data on PHE policy & strategy, teaching & learning as well as research, development & innovation building on the HAPHE framework of characteristics.

#### **Key Finding: PHE is offered predominantly on EQF level 6.**

In all countries of the HAPHE study PHE is offered at EQF level 6. PHE programmes, at EQF 5 exist in some countries and are developing dynamically. Students can apply for PHE programmes at level 7 in half of the investigated countries. Only Irish PHE is offered on EQF level 8.

We observe a tendency to rebrand PHE institutions as Universities of Applied sciences/Technical Universities and more collaborations of PHE programmes with academic institutions for doctoral research.

#### **Recommendation: Stimulate a consultation process whether to widen PHE provision to higher EQF (7 and 8) levels**

At first sight, PHE at EQF level 7 and 8 appears adverse to the original aim of PHE provision (prepare for the labour market). However, in light of the growing importance of RDI and specialist knowledge in a knowledge-driven economy, it is timely to discuss with all stakeholders whether increased provision of PHE at higher levels would be beneficial for more effective engagement in knowledge/technology transfer.

New arrangements should provide a fair space for keeping the professional profile of programmes and institutions.

#### **Recommendation: Strengthen effective PHE provision at EQF level 5**

PHE programmes on EQF level 5 should be strengthened in their double function to provide effective and efficient solutions for labour market entry and as entry route for further studies.

**Key finding: A number of PHE programmes lack a systematic organisation of practice-learning phases**

Although a solid proportion of PHE programmes is organised in an integrated (study and practice-learning phases alternate) or enriched (academic study is enriched through practice-learning phases such as internships) study mode, our results show that almost 30% of PHE providers do not have any of the two modes (fully) implemented. This constitutes a shortcoming in light of the aim of PHE to prepare learners for the world of work, also in the light of aims for developing the European Higher Education Area further encouraging “work placements embedded in study programmes as well as on-the-job learning” .

**Recommendation: Increase efforts to systematically include practice-learning phases in PHE programmes and exchange knowledge on successful implementation**

Practice-learning phases serve to reflect on theory in a practical context. Making experiences outside of the HE institution a part of the PHE learning environment is the most direct way to foster professional and life skills and enable learners to act in a self-organised and independent way in a changing labour market. Guidelines should be developed within the framework of European and national umbrella associations for PHE, helping to put into place practice-learning phases with (even closer) links to the world of work .

**Recommendations to associations representing PHE**

**Key Finding: The self-understanding of PHE among staff is usually not linked to providing HE for non-traditional learners**

The HAPHE study showed that only a minority of PHE staff views their programme as catering to adult and disadvantaged learners. This, however, does not mean that PHE is not attended by more learners from this group compared to academic higher education. We suspect a discrepancy between a substantial group of learners and the capacity of staff and management to adapt their mode of provision, teaching focus and methodology, facilities, etc. to their particular needs.

**Recommendation: PHE providers should develop measures to make PHE more attractive and accessible to non-traditional groups**

In order to widen access to PHE of adults and disadvantaged groups, PHE needs to be flexible in terms of admission routes/study arrangements and reach-out initiatives.

In specific terms those measures could:

- a. offer more part-time programmes, integrated study models in which the learner is also employed in a company (through alternating practice phases) or even onsite courses in remote locations of large industry in collaboration with employers, in order to cater to adult learners
- b. raise the staff to student ratio, run targeted re-skilling programmes based on regional business needs, awareness programmes on benefits of PHE/employment perspectives to reach-out to disadvantaged learners.

Another group that would benefit from such measures are graduates of academic programmes that want a top-up professional qualification to be better prepared for the labour market.

### **Recommendations for Quality Managers**

#### **Key finding: PHE has distinct and defined indicators of core quality**

This publication has presented the main work and outputs of the HAPHE initiative, in particular the 'PHE Characteristics Framework'. The framework was subject to wide consultation throughout the EHEA, with input having come in from experts, European and national stakeholders over a two year period – giving it significant legitimacy as a consensus position of the main European stakeholders. In particular, the framework proposes 'core criteria' which together elaborate a set of minimum requirements which an educational experience must adhere to, so as to be considered professional higher education.

#### **Recommendation: Incorporate the PHE Characteristics into Institutional Quality Assurance Procedures and Quality Culture**

The PHE characteristics define the areas in which the 'professional' nature of PHE is expressed. The core criteria provide a minimum baseline for quality for each of these areas. As such, they can be a valuable tool for quality managers within PHE to ensure quality of the professional connection with the world of work, and to identify opportunities for continuous improvement of that connection. For quality managers AHE searching to 'professionalise' their programmes, the characteristics provide a clear roadmap of areas for further work.

#### **Recommendation: Develop Indicators to measure quality expression of the characteristics**

While the characteristics and core criteria provide a minimum requirement the educational experience must adhere to, so as to be considered true professional higher education, they give no indication as to what 'high quality' or 'excellent' provision of PHE in each of the areas might entail. We therefore recommend that a set of indicators be developed to complement the criteria, such that they may form a comprehensive quality tool for institutions.

#### **Recommendation: Take Account of the distinct nature of PHE in external QA/Accreditation processes**

While the European Standards and Guidelines for Higher Education provide a universally applicable quality standard for HE, the expression of these guidelines are often different in professional and academic HE. Review teams should therefore be equipped to take account of these different profiles, either through training or through official interpretations of the standards. Thus, for example The European QA Agency, EQAA, which offers a (slightly) different standard/criteria for reviewing the research activities of professionally oriented programmes compared to academically oriented programmes – a practice that could be replicated by other agencies and accreditation bodies.

## **Dissemination & Exploitation**

In a project such as HAPHE, dissemination is essential to ensure that the outcomes have a sustainable impact. Taking into account that overall results wish to make a concrete impact on the European education sphere, it is of crucial importance to have the project well promoted among stakeholders and get them committed to further disseminate our activities and results, especially after the project's termination.

Therefore, dissemination activities were thoroughly planned and supported among consortium members.

During the timeline of WP1, the stakeholders' survey was carried out, which gave the project an opportunity for high promotion within different levels of education stakeholders. Reaching more than 2.000 personal contacts, we finally came to 671 respondents to the survey.

Our website has reached over 4.000 visitors from 95 countries, with an important increase after the presentation of the publications and the Conference announcement. This shows a great interest of the wider audience for our results and it is our duty to stimulate this interest further.

At the same time, partners have been encouraged to use the opportunity of speaking at various events and conferences for disseminating the information on the project. We have reported an overall number of over 170 dissemination activities of the sort.

We estimate that the project has achieved considerable impact. Among the highlight figures we can include that:

- the consortium recorded over 170 dissemination instances during the project's timeline;
- the website recorded over 4.000 visitors, resulting in 25.000 page views from 95 countries and territories;
- extensive promotion resulted in participation of 671 participants in our surveys;
- over 400 persons have opted-in to receiving more information on the project's activities and outputs;
- the main 2 publications have been printed in 1.230 copies, 530 for the *Profile of Professional Higher Education in Europe* and 700 for the *PHE in Europe – Characteristics, Practice Examples and National Differences*.

## 4. Partnerships

The HAPHE consortium is composed of 11 partners from 10 EU countries under the leadership of the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE).

The composition of the consortium has been carefully designed in order to maximise the potential in reaching expected aims.

EURASHE, as the umbrella representative organisation of higher education institutions offering professional programmes has a unique role in the development of PHE on the European level, and through its membership influences the development of that sector on national and regional levels. Currently around 1.100 higher education institutions in 40 countries within and outside the EHEA are affiliated to EURASHE. EURASHE members are national associations of higher education institutions and individual institutions, such as universities, (university) colleges and universities of applied sciences, as well as other professional associations and stakeholder organisations active in the field of higher education. EURASHE shows an in-depth expertise in the field of PHE from both the perspectives of policy and practice.

Six national umbrella organisations of PHE and two individual institutions are consortium members. Namely the Association of Slovene Higher Vocational Colleges (ASHVC) (Slovenia), the Czech Association of Schools of Professional Higher Education (CASPHE) (Czech Republic), Tallinna Tehnikakõrgkool University of Applied Sciences (TTK UAS) (Estonia), the State Higher Vocational School Tarnow (PWSZ-TAR) (Poland), the Flemish Council of University Colleges (VLHORA) (Belgium), the Assemblée des Directeurs d'IUT (ADIUT) (France), the Conselho Coordenador dos Institutos Superiores Politécnicos (CCISP) (Portugal), and the Croatian Council of Universities and University Colleges of Applied Sciences (VVIVŠ) (Croatia). These partners have special expertise on policy developments and policy implementation challenges on national, regional and institutional levels. They are the typical institutions which would apply the principles developed in the project on a daily basis, both with their own organisations, and throughout their membership.

Two partners, the Baden-Württemberg State Cooperative University (DHBW) (Germany) and Knowledge Innovation Centre KIC (Malta) provided specific expertise in quality system design, institutional profiling and stakeholder analysis as well as communication planning, to complement the overall skills of the consortium.

## 5. Plans for the Future

The HAPHE project lasted for 25 months and finished in October 2014. The HAPHE project was developed as a big idea, and is at the same time a great example of how through the project these ideas continue growing, and well developed cooperation has the opportunity to continue and further build upon the outcomes.

The main task of HAPHE has been achieved; we have produced a publication which gives an overview of different settings in which PHE institutions are functioning across Europe. We have involved a large number of stakeholders in order to propose a definition and a set of characteristics which are now to be used as a benchmark for further work on the harmonisation process. We have prepared the implementation guidelines for institutions and policy recommendation for policy-makers. But our work doesn't stop here. While understanding the weight these outcomes have, and the opportunities there are for these to be further promoted and used for the work on harmonisation, the HAPHE partnership has first of all decided to continue working as a team, under the governance of EURASHE. At the last meeting in Otocec, prior to the launch conference, partners have decided to form a **EURASHE's task force on the Mission of Professional Higher Education**. Currently established as a testing phase, the Task Force will be further developed into a Working Group. The first meeting of the Task Force took place in December 2014 in Vilnius (Lithuania). The task Force is made out of HAPHE partners (except for KIC-Malta who will join on an expert basis). Additional members of EURASHE have joined the team as well, after attending several HAPHE presentations and promotional events in the past 2 years. The Task Force created in December its working agenda and decided on strategic priorities. These are based on the core criteria that come out of the HAPHE results. Therefore, this group will work in 2015 on topics such as harmonisation of PHE, convergence between VET and PHE, financing of PHE etc. The task force will as well be looking into possible development of new project proposals in 2015 and 2016, based on the further development of some core criteria, e.g. cooperation with the world of work.

Besides the newly formed Task Force which will ensure sustainability of the HAPHE outcomes, it is important to see as well the further activities foreseen on the policy level, in order to make the most out of the project. In May 2015, Yerevan (Armenia) will be hosting Conference of Ministers in charge of Higher Education in the European Higher Education Area, the most important higher education event organised under the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG), with a large political impact. As a consultative member of the BFUG, EURASHE is one of the stakeholders present at this conference. The policy recommendations that came out of the HAPHE project will be the core political message and advocacy tool used by EURASHE's delegates and will be presented to all the national representatives before and during the event. Having such a timely opportunity will have a great impact on the HAPHE outcomes.

Additionally, promotion of the HAPHE outcomes will be done in the following years through all of the events each of the partners will be organising. The website will continue running and will be constantly updated with newer information, as well as with the developments and enlarged scope of activities coming out of the work of the Task Force. These further steps, including the establishment of a permanent Working Group, as well as opportunities for

advocacy work, are a clear show of successful continuation and sustainability of the project's outcomes and ensure strong impact in the months and years to come.

## 6. Contribution to EU policies

The higher education sector in Europe is following a trend towards harmonisation, with the EHEA, the Bologna Process, and the continuous efforts of the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG). However, this harmonisation mostly applies to traditional universities, academic higher education. The sector of PHE still varies greatly at a national and sometimes even regional level. The sector currently knows major transformations. Being more and more recognised as a provider of social integration and raised employability, PHE develops and sometimes evolves into full-right universities, while universities, triggered by the undeniable advantages a practical training offers, diversify their offer towards more professionally-orientated curricula. The borders are blurred, evolving, but still very visible in some countries. Due to the wide variety of provision methods, qualification levels and disciplines PHE covers and the varied national systems which now fall under the umbrella term of PHE, it is at the moment extremely hard to transnationally analyse this sector, which hinders recognition of qualifications, and limits the possibility of soft-policy tools to strengthen its growth.

The HAPHE project defined clearly PHE at a European scale, and created a consensus around this definition and the characteristics of PHE.

As such, the HAPHE project aims at PHE being clearly and unequivocally classified within the European Qualification Framework (EQF) and EU-promoted ranking and typology tools. This will allow the sector to develop transnationally, facilitating student exchange, mutual recognition and quality assurance. It will also allow for transnational comparison, best practice sharing and general improvement of this crucial sector. More specifically, it contributes to the following aspects.

### **Contribute to the establishment of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)**

The area of PHE has still not gained the same integration within the EHEA as traditional higher education, mainly due to the wide variety of provision methods, qualification levels and disciplines it covers, with wide variations in the definition of the sector between countries. The clear definition of PHE, together with its mapping to transparency tools, will allow it to be clearly positioned within the structures of the EHEA, and hence better participate within its structures.

### **Increase the degree of transparency and compatibility between higher education and advanced vocational education qualifications**

By creating a set of harmonised defining characteristics for PHE so as to clearly position professional higher education within the overall context of European higher education position. The project reached consensus around its proposals, through extensive consultation with all stakeholders.

### **Support the modernisation of higher education**

HAPHE supports higher education institutions in enhancing their accountability and recognition by developing a set of acknowledged characteristics and definition. In order to

ensure proper use of the quality criteria, implementation recommendations were developed. Transparency tools are inevitably supporting recognition of qualifications, cooperation and best practice sharing.

### **Improve the quality and increase the volume of multilateral co-operation between higher education institutions in Europe**

The identification of a set of characteristics defining PHE allows increased harmonisation of the sector across Europe. Such harmonisation in turn supports improved cooperation, from a quantitative and quality perspective. The definition, which contributes towards the characteristics, provides a single basis for best-practice sharing and supports collaboration initiatives.

### **Underline the importance of PHE for innovation**

In strengthening the sector through a process of harmonisation of definitions, and with the incorporation of set of characteristics based on linkage with enterprise and society (a key distinguishing feature of PHE), the project also enhanced the contribution of PHE towards innovation.

### **Help promote creativity, entrepreneurship, competitiveness and employability**

The project was designed to strengthen the PHE sector, and improve its attractiveness by improving possibilities for recognition and the transparency of quality systems. This will on a longer term result in students being increasingly able to choose learning pathways which are specifically tailored towards employment, collaborate with enterprise during their studies, and pursue entrepreneurship as a discipline in and of itself.

### **To contribute to the development of quality lifelong learning**

On a longer term, this project will strengthen the PHE sector, by proposing the definition and the set of characteristics, implementation guidelines and indicators to monitor progress across the sector. In addition, the project will position PHE within the lifelong learning spectrum, by mapping it to the EQF and EU-promoted ranking and typology tools.

By strengthening the PHE sector, and improving the transparency of the PHE provision, the project will enhance employability of European higher education graduates as a whole, contribute towards a more cohesive EHEA, enhance the contribution of PHE towards innovation and Europe 2020 strategy and support the modernisation of European higher education institutions, through encouragement of increasing responsiveness to enterprise and society.

## **7. Main research findings: *Profile of Professional Higher Education in Europe***

### **7.1. Introduction: What is meant by PHE?**

The term PHE is not to be defined. Rather it is a 'passe-partout' word for educational programmes and trainings that exist under different education structures in most European countries. However, at present, there is no sharp, generally acknowledged definition of PHE, and one shall not expect that such definition will appear soon.

The only justification for such a term may then be that throughout Europe there are institutions and programmes that profess themselves as profession-oriented, or want to be styled as such. The reason for this is taking into account that they recognise themselves in a number of features or indicators that are linked to the predicate 'professional'.

From the above-mentioned absence of any categorisation we may conclude that PHE is just part of higher education and therefore operates within the same triangle of education, knowledge creation (research) and services to the community. Another advantage of this approach is that it is possible to define PHE without referring to historical levels and (national) (higher) education structures, and even not to certain types of institutions and ways of learning. PHE can occur in all kinds of institutions in the broad spectrum of academic, professional and vocational strands, in the same way as it can be offered in several modes of learning (next to the traditional ones), such as contact learning, distance learning, blended learning as well as formal and non-formal learning.

Identifying academic institutions with 'highly theoretical courses' and professionally-oriented institutions and programmes with 'practical skills development or training' means to disregard the fact that the comprehensive universities have offered and continue to offer vocational trainings such as for prospective physicians, dentists, veterinary surgeons and architects, which are all 'professionals' in their own right.

#### **7.1.1. Past and present evolutions and trends that influence the current debate on PHE**

In past decades, we could witness various convergent and divergent processes in higher education, which have had an influence on what is perceived as professional versus academic higher education. On the one hand, an 'academic drift' pushed 'many non-academic' institutions to profile themselves as (near) equivalents to the traditional universities, often quite successfully (e.g. as was the case in Germany with the 'Fachhochschulen').

This out of a fear to be considered (by prospective students and also employers) as being second-class entities in the world of higher education, next to the research universities.

On the other hand, the explosion of the technological and commercial sectors dating back to as far as the nineteen seventies, in combination with a rise of income for middle class families, led to a steep rise of student numbers, which were (to be) trained in the newly

established polytechnic-type of institutions (especially in Western European countries). Some of them developed into new ('red-brick') universities, after gaining their autonomy from local authorities (as was the case in e.g. the United Kingdom).

Soon a rationale for such type of institutions was then developed, in both government and employer's circles, which was based on the 'employability' factor, namely that a skills-oriented training is a guarantee of prospective careers in a well-defined job. This rationale has been upheld till recent times, only to be shattered by the recent economic and financial crisis.

Academic programmes would reluctantly in the beginning and then increasingly in the last decades adopt this reasoning, which meant that a 'vocational drift' became apparent in a large number of research universities. The National Qualifications Frameworks that have been developed the past few years have strengthened this process, and even highly academic programmes felt compelled to include practical elements into curricula, and in the formulation of learning outcomes.

The above meant that the boundaries between originally purely academic trainings (in some disciplines at least) and the original professional ones became blurred.

From the viewpoint of the PHE sector, there is always a 'general' education content in professionally-oriented programmes, as it is precisely this component that makes them belong to 'higher education'. The shift of paradigm to learning outcomes-based programmes, with the right combination of technical or vocational and more general humanistic skills has only strengthened the concept and perception that PHE is just a 'variety' of higher education.

A second factor of influence' is the nature and status of the provider. With 'nature' is meant the profile of the institution based on its mission, whereas the 'status' refers to the organising authority or awarding body (public institution, privately owned or a blend of this).

PHE programmes are found in a variety of settings, which can be (and mostly is) an individual institution providing professionally-oriented programmes. Other contexts exist where they are affiliated to or integrated into a 'comprehensive institution', which offers vocational programmes next to academic ones.

The discussion on the situation of 'Level 5' of the EQF in the different national qualifications frameworks is essential, as it is in some countries the interface between vocational and higher education.

At present, different concepts of higher education institutions co-exist now also in the academic range of institutions (from the post-Humboldtian 'ivory tower' to the 'entrepreneurial university'), and now also 'dual learning' institutions as they came into existing in some of the federal German states, on the model of the long-established vocational trainings.

The so-called 'dual universities', with sometimes mixed 'ownership' of the management are mostly public institutions, which provide a system of shared responsibilities between the public authorities and private companies, who take care of the technical or practical aspects of the training, while paying the student a salary, who is for this part considered an employee. Such joint initiatives are rare in other countries, as they can only exist if the prevailing economic conditions of a country allow this, which is not often the case in the current economic and financial crisis.

A third important factor is the terminology, as reflected in the name of the institutions, the programmes and especially of the degrees.

For the important shift in the name of the institutions with a clear and long-standing vocational or professional orientation, as is the case with the present 'Universities of Applied Sciences' see further on.

In a number of countries the degree name is linked to the professional or academic orientation of the programmes, with professional and academic bachelors respectively.

In many countries, the degrees 'academic bachelor' and 'professional bachelor', although classified at the same level of the qualifications framework (1st cycle/EQF level 6) are not fully compatible and direct continuation of second-cycle studies by 'professional bachelors' is virtually impossible without 1 to 2 years of 'bridging studies'.

The occurrence of such a distinction (professional – academic) becomes rarer in the second cycle of the qualifications framework, and is virtually non-existent on the doctoral level. Although countries with a binary system of higher education (in the same way as it exists on the level of secondary education, where we have the terms technical vs. general education), more often have the distinction than is the case for the countries with a unitary (university only) type of higher education.

### **7.1.2. Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) vs. University Colleges (UC)**

Universities of Applied Sciences are a (relatively) new name, which is gradually substituting the original University Colleges, still in use in the UK and other countries that tend to copy the English example. Traditionally, University Colleges are the former Colleges, which were either mono-disciplinary and teaching advanced and specialist vocationally-oriented trainings, or else multi-disciplinary colleges that had not (yet) reached university status, for several reasons: less than five faculties or disciplines, under 5 000 students, no doctoral degrees, etc. Nowadays the term UC is mainly in use in the UK for higher education institutions which are in the above described position and feel comfortable in it, as they have established a close connection with the world of employment, for the specialist trainings they are offering.

The term Universities of Applied Sciences is a translation of the original German 'Hochschule für angewandte Wissenschaften (HAW)'. ('Hochschulen' is also the generic term in Germany for all institutions awarding academic degrees in higher education). Since the Bologna Process started 'Universitäten' and 'Fachhochschulen' (UAS) award legally equivalent academic Bachelor's and Master's degrees. In Germany, some (of the largest) Fachhochschulen award doctoral degrees as well.

Both Switzerland and Austria used the same denomination, and the example has been followed by the Netherlands, Finland and the Baltic countries. Other countries, like Lithuania, only use the term to paraphrase their own denominations for the use of their international contacts, but never in a 'home' context, as their own legislation exclusively reserves the term 'universities' for the 'research' universities. The same for countries like Portugal (where the 'native' term is 'Polytechnico') and Ireland (where the 'native' term is 'Institute of Technology') who consider UAS as a suitable translation in an international context. Others like Denmark,

Belgium (mainly Flanders) continue to use the term University College, as the term 'applied sciences' seems to exclude the human sciences (except for economics), and also the Schools of Arts. Croatia appears to adopt a middle-of the road solution, by choosing the term 'University Colleges of Applied Sciences'.

As there is also a lot of research (though of an applied or technological nature) done at Fachhochschulen/UAS, mainly sponsored by industry, the main difference with universities seems to be that only the 'real universities' can award doctors degrees, though some Fachhochschulen/UAS also run doctoral programs where the degree itself is awarded by a partner university.

### **7.1.3. Summary**

PHE is characterised by the fact that its education 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.

PHE plays an important role as an intermediary between higher education, vocational education and training and the labour market. In particular, PHE institutions are - in a way – 'bilingual'; they speak both the academic and professional language, and can thus be key players in the process of a better understanding between higher education and the world of work.

To attain this aim, it is important to elaborate multidimensional characteristics of PHE, with adequate quality indicators, and to make a comparative review of existing higher education structures in European countries, identifying also problems and weak points of present systems. This is precisely one of the aims of the HAPHE project.

## **7.2. Current trends and data**

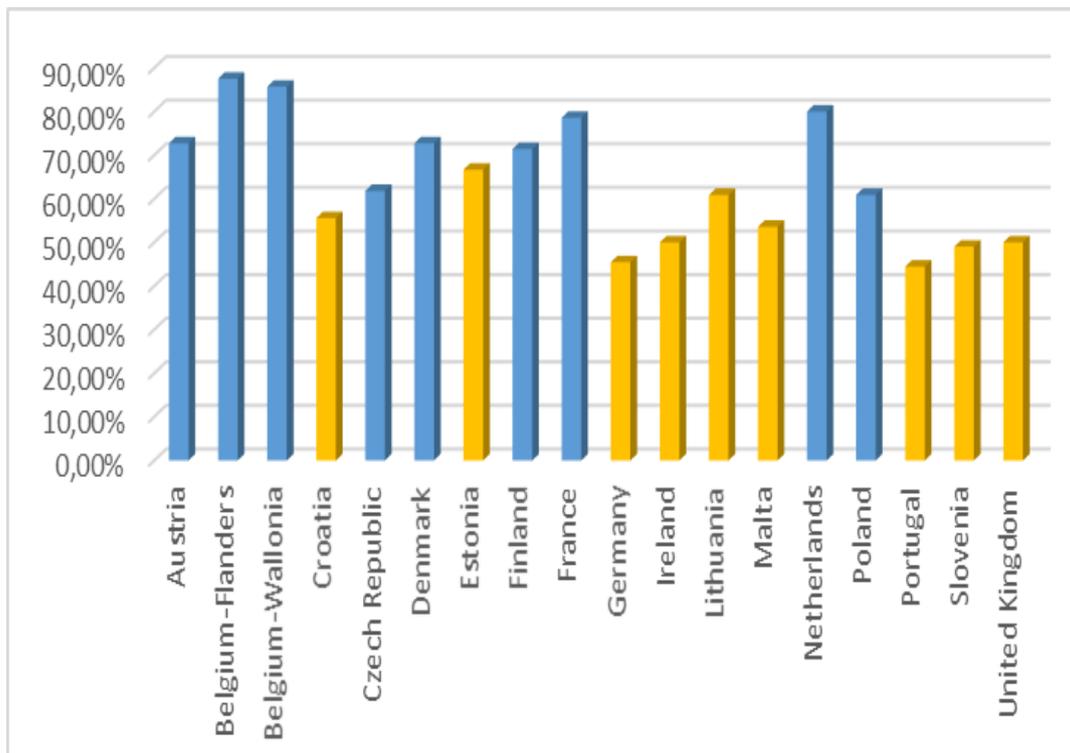
### **7.2.1. What is PHE?**

As part of our survey, we asked respondents "Is the term *Professional Higher Education* clear"<sup>2</sup>: 60% of HEIs, 57% of system-level stakeholders and 57% of external level stakeholders found the term clear. This indicates that a significant (c.40%) of respondents has a poor understanding of the term. A cross-European comparison shows considerable divergence in the term across countries, with Croatia, Estonia, Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia and the UK showing particularly low understanding of the term.

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<sup>2</sup> Participants rated the statement on a scale of 1-5, where 4 represented 'clear' and 5 represented 'very clear'.

**Figure 1 - % of respondents from HEIs who report having a clear or very clear understanding of the term PHE, by country**



This said, in our review of legislation, all countries distinguish a sphere of education as having a ‘professional character’. This distinction is made in one of two ways. By distinguishing PHE itself, e.g. Croatia distinguishes ‘professional programmes’, the Czech Republic ‘professional bachelor programmes’ and Poland ‘practical profile’. By distinguishing professional institutions from universities, e.g. Lithuanian law differentiates College Higher Education from universities and Finland differentiates universities from polytechnics

### **7.2.2. What characterises PHE?**

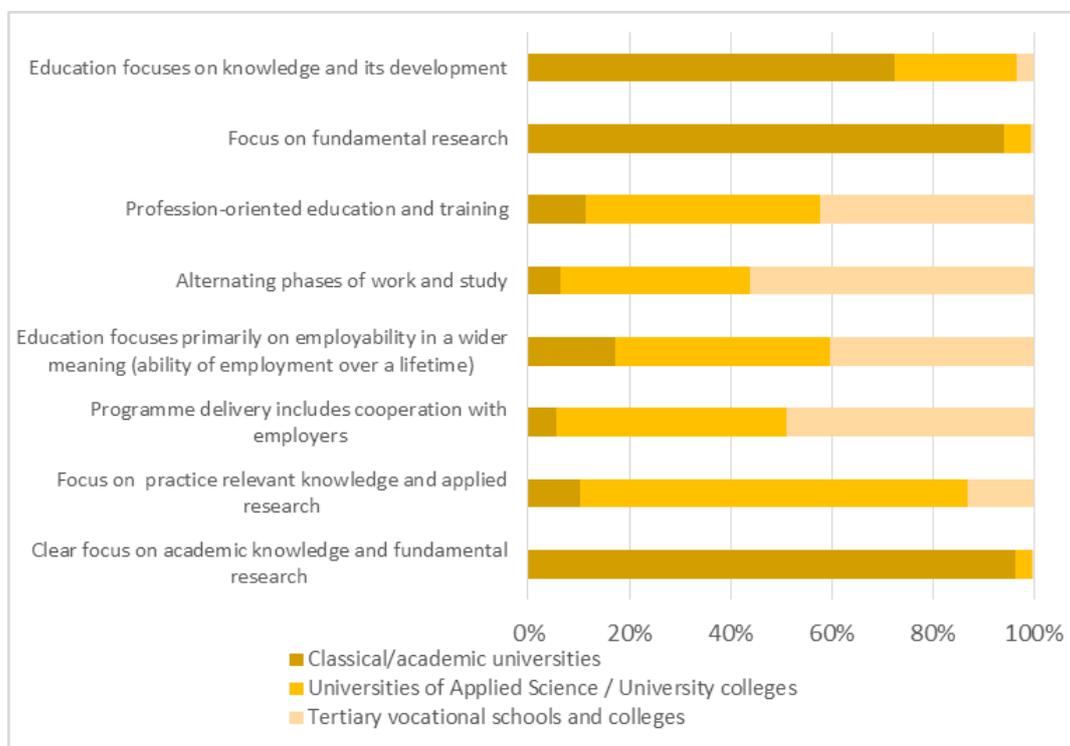
Our survey of stakeholders asked participants to characterise PHE by choosing from a set of pre-defined statements. None of the statements received an overwhelming consent from respondents, further indicating the confusion that exists as to the nature of PHE, however, the highest rated statements were the following:

- (PHE is characterised by a) strong focus on practical application of study – 59%
- The curriculum (in PHE) emphasises practical aspects and elements for development of skills and competence – 56%
- The study program (in PHE) includes extended phases of practical experiences in the form of internships and/or work experiences (56%)

All the other statements presented to respondents were agreed to by less than half of the respondents, namely:

- The combining of academic and professional elements
- The study programme is focused on practical aspects of the specific job profile (44%)
- Collaboration between HEIs and the Industry going beyond Higher Education provision but also covering research and education (42%)
- Strong Focus on Practical Application of Research (40%);
- HE providing education & training for update/upgrade of qualifications of students with working experience (e.g. in-service training) (33%)
- HE providing qualifications to non-traditional groups (adult learners and, disadvantaged groups with flexible arrangements) (13%)

**Figure 2 - Institution most associated with various characteristics. (Choice of only one institution-type), %**



The last statement in particular merits further investigation, as it refutes the BaLaMa finding that a key role of Universities of Applied Science is in widening participation in lifelong learning through the accommodation of non-traditional, older and part-time students.

A clearer picture emerges when we asked participants to position a number of characteristics primarily within the academic universities, universities of applied sciences or tertiary vocational schools and colleges. Here we find that participants predominantly consider academic higher education to focus on knowledge and its development as well as on fundamental research. PHE is seen as focusing on profession-oriented education and training, alternating phases of work and study, employability, programme delivery in cooperation with employers and on practice-relevant knowledge and applied research.

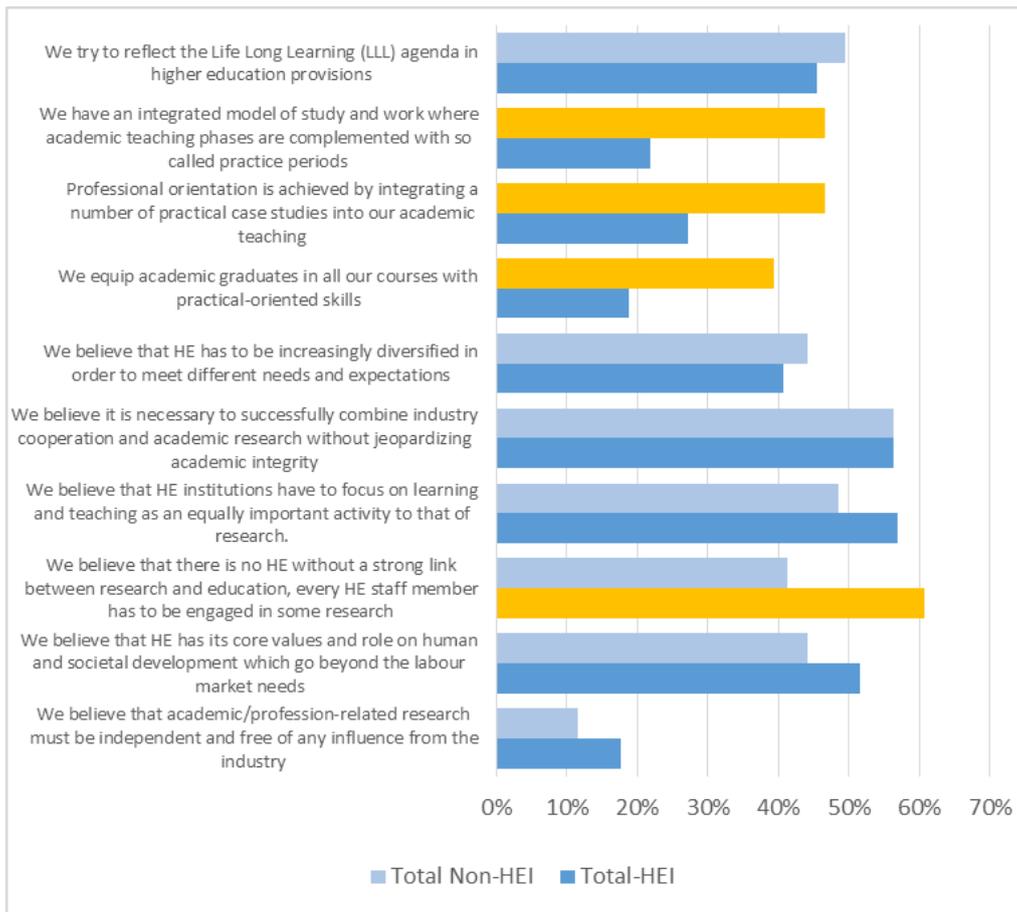
Our review of legislation provides further hints as to what characterises PHE, with all versions of the legislation making a link to the labour market. Thus, e.g. in Slovenia, Vocational Colleges have the mission to “on an internationally comparable level, provide knowledge and skills needed for work and further education” and in Ireland Regional Technical Colleges are to “provide vocational and technical education and training for the economical, technological, scientific, commercial, industrial social and cultural development of the State”.

Finally, we asked respondents from higher education institutions to characterise a set of statements based on the validity within their institutions. Here we found that, while none of the statements were agreed to overwhelmingly by respondents, there were significant differences in the number of respondents from academic higher education institutions and those from PHE institutions. Thus, those from PHE institutions were more likely to find that their institution:

- has an integrated model of study and work where academic teaching phases are complemented with so called practice periods
- achieves professional orientation by integrating a number of practical case studies into academic teaching
- equips academic graduates in all courses with practical-oriented skills

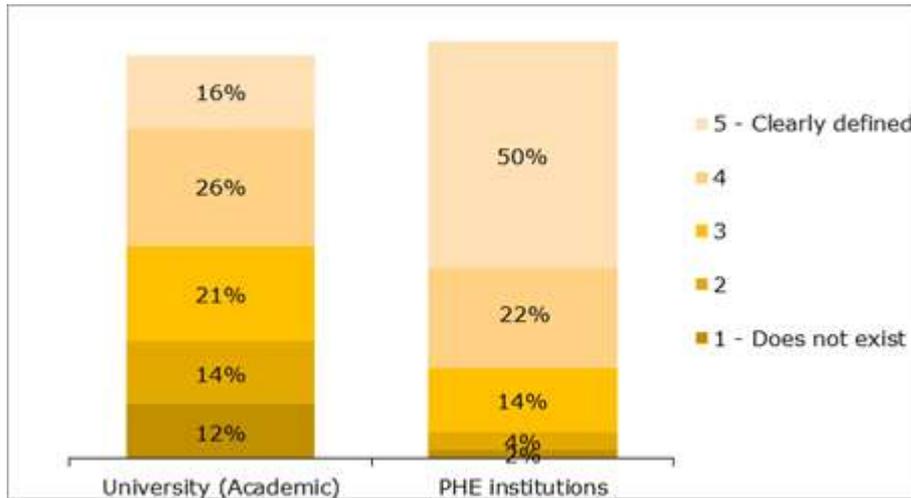
On the other hand, those from PHE institutions were more likely to “believe that there is no Higher Education without a strong link between research and education, every Higher Education staff member has to be engaged in some research”.

**Figure 3 - % of respondents from HEIs and Non-HEIs agreeing to statements**



Thus, on the surface, we can conclude that PHE is primarily characterised by (a) an orientation towards the labour market; (b) special models of provision; (c) different methods of teaching, especially with respect to integration of practice into teaching; and (d) differing attitudes towards research.

**Figure 4 - Respondents whose institution has a mission statements which is clearly defined and explicitly refers to higher education and**



### 7.3. Concluding remarks

At the present stage, we can witness the interplay of two strands contributing to the dynamics of the development of the EHEA. The first one is related to the harmonisation of European education and training systems. On the one hand, National Qualification Frameworks are being designed and a 'self-consistent field' of European qualifications is emerging, with the EQF as a reference system. Also, a non-trivial process of matching EQF with the Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (QF-EHEA) is being conducted. The new ISCED 2011 classification, compatible with EQF, is also emerging as a useful tool to classify various educational and training provisions at the global scale.

Another important strand is a multidimensional approach to rankings and classifications of European higher education institutions in the framework of U-Multirank project. U-Multirank is - in a way - an antidote to mostly research-based criteria used in world-wide rankings like ARWU or THES.

It is obvious that external factors and pressures may strongly influence the development of various sectors of education and training. On the other hand, different sectors have their own intrinsic dynamics and shall also influence their environment, including directions of European education and training policy.

We do hope that the outcomes of the HAPHE project will help to consolidate PHE at different levels (from institutions through PHE-related networks and associations up to policy makers).

The EU high-level group on modernisation of higher education has just published its first report<sup>3</sup> on improving the quality of teaching and learning in universities. It calls upon universities to 'Train the professors to teach', and contains valuable recommendations for improving quality in teaching and learning.

<sup>3</sup> **EU high level group: train the professors to teach**; European Commission - IP/13/554 18/06/2013

We foresee that several developments will have a crucial impact on the character and profile of professionally-oriented programmes in the coming years, in particular:

- 'Employability' of academic higher education, resulting into an increased competition between university and non-university higher education institutions (due to the decreasing number of students, changes in the labour market etc.).
- Introduction of NQF: The Bucharest Communiqué (2012) explicitly states that countries that will not have finalized the implementation of national qualifications frameworks compatible with QF-EHEA by the end of 2012 will be asked to redouble their efforts and submit a revised roadmap for this task, (which is expected to be completed by the next Ministerial meeting in Yerevan in 2015).
- Development of RPL/LLL: there is now in some countries a possibility for the learner to use RPL for personal development within a work setting and/or for getting exemptions for a study program or for creating a more tailor made learning pathway. This may lead to Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning. However in most countries the main focus is still on Validation of learning outcomes for someone's career and targets related to that, using qualifications for formal education (vocational education and training, vocational education and training, and higher education) – offered by institutions for higher education and/or vocational education and training.
- The phenomenon of Rankings, which has led to initiatives like the U-Multirank and U-Map projects, as a response of the European Union (its higher education institutions, the European Commission, stakeholders) to a global challenge of competition and cooperation. A classification which is different from traditional rankings (focused exclusively on the level of research), but that would be based on multidimensional criteria, which takes into account different profiles and missions of higher education institutions, the corresponding nature of teaching (and of research), the targeted audience (first generation students, adult students).
- The importance of (academic) 'recognition', with the crucial role played by the Council of Europe and UNESCO in developing the (regional) Recognition Conventions (e.g. the Lisbon Recognition convention for the EHEA countries and North America).
- The growing importance of the short-cycle higher education (SCHE) qualifications, which in some countries replace the former traditional PHE as distinguished from academic or university education. This may be due to the fact that in times of economic crisis and recession, also the number of unemployed with a qualification or degree of short cycle education is lower than the number of people without any higher qualification.