

*Highlights from EURASHE since the
latest meeting of the BFUG in Vilnius (Lithuania) on 7-8 November 2013*

EURASHE 24th Annual Conference: Qualifications for the Labour Market

EURASHE will organise its 24th Annual Conference on the theme 'Qualifications for the Labour Market' in Yerevan (Armenia) on 15-16 May 2014. It will be hosted by the Yerevan State University (YSU), the National University of Architecture and Construction of Armenia (YSUAC), and with the support of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Armenia and the Rectors Council of Armenian State Higher Educational Institutions.

In the run-up to our 25th anniversary and to the next Ministerial Conference of the European Higher Education Area, also to be held in Yerevan in 2015, the choice of this topic shows the confidence of a sector of higher education, which has gained in status and relevance. Professional qualifications are also a focal point in EURASHE's HAPHE project (Harmonising Approaches to Professional Higher Education in Europe)¹, which is an attempt at mapping professionally-orientated programmes in Europe, in different national systems and contexts, irrespective of the level or qualification. Employability is more and more a central topic in education, also in spheres where it was previously not acknowledged as an objective of education, such as in quality assurance processes. The question what contributes to a graduate's employability, and therefore indirectly to his or her employment prospects, is a crucial one in current difficult economic times.

See also: www.eurashe.eu/yerevan

Report on EURASHE Workshop on Learning Outcomes

On 13 December 2013 EURASHE co-organised with the Czech Association of Schools of Professional Higher Education (CASPHE) a Workshop on Learning Outcomes in Prague (Czech Republic). Bringing together a community of practice with international experts from Germany, Belgium and Ireland, the workshop participants focused on learning outcomes, their implementation and assessment in the teaching/learning process. Attendants also shared their experience with the relevant themes, their approaches, good and bad practices. The various sessions were introduced by experts and participants provided their institutions'/country case and raised various topics for group discussions.

See also: www.eurashe.eu/prague-lo

¹ HAPHE is a project financed by the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union.

Mapping quality models and labels for professional higher education excellence in Europe

EURASHE has launched the PHExcel project (Testing the Feasibility of a Quality Label for Professional Higher Education Excellence)². The first stage of the project is to map currently available quality tools in higher education institutions, which may be quality models or quality labels. A typology will be created and a gap analysis will be conducted to review these tools in light of the criteria of professional higher education developed in the HAPHE project. The outcomes will be published in the *Report on Quality Tools for the Review and Improvement of Professional Higher Education* in May 2014.

The PHExcel project will then continue onwards with the second stage dedicated to creating a draft Quality Framework for Professional Higher Education Excellence through a series of expert group meetings. This will take place from June 2014 to February 2015.

See also: www.eurashe.eu/phexcel

European-wide Validation Seminars on Defining Professional Higher Education (PHE)

The HAPHE project is launching a series of national and regional validation seminars on defining professional higher education throughout Europe. This follows the first stage of mapping professional higher education in Europe, whose results are presented in the publication *Profile of Professional Higher Education in Europe*. The second stage developed a definition of professional higher education and a set of characteristics accompanied by core criteria.

The EU-level validation seminar was held in Brussels (Belgium) on 5 February 2014. It gathered over 20 participants representing key stakeholders on European level. This led to important debates on what is professional higher education in the context of the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area. National and regional validation seminars will be held in Belgium-Flanders (28 April), Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark (1 May), Estonia, France (9 April), Germany, Malta (5 April), Poland, Portugal (29 April), and Slovenia. The aim of these seminars is to validate the draft definition and characteristics.

After analysing the feedback from all validation seminars, we will refine the definition and set of characteristics and present them to the wider higher education community. It will be presented in a report on *Defining Characteristics and Criteria for Professional Higher Education*, and accompanied by an *Implementation Report for Professional Higher Education Institutions* and an *Implementation Report for Policy-Makers*. The launch conference of the HAPHE project will take place in October in Slovenia.

See also: www.eurashe.eu/haphe

² PHExcel is a project financed by the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union.