

Highlights from EURASHE September 2020 – April 2021

PAST EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Online event “Recognition of Prior Learning in Higher Education”, October-November 2020, online

The discussions on innovative and flexible learning, its relevance and focus on students from various target groups have brought a growing attention to the instrument of Recognition of Prior Learning – hereafter RPL – as a means for enhancing the access to higher education, ensure the flexibility of its provision, and reflecting on the changing higher education landscape. Following the many challenges brought by the recent pandemic, RPL could also prove to be a crucial asset in ensuring a more inclusive access to further studies and promoting lifelong learning opportunities.

It against this background that EURASHE, together with the Swedish Council for Higher Education and its partners of the RPLip project, organised the online event “Recognition of Prior Learning in higher education” in the months of October and November 2020, presenting the outcomes of the project and offering a platform to further develop the discussion around quality assured and consistent processes to recognise non-formal and informal learning throughout Europe.

The online event consisted of two webinars:

- “Why recognition and validation of prior informal and non-formal learning?”, which took place on Tuesday 13 October 2020, 14:30-16:00 CEST on Zoom
- “How to validate and recognize prior informal and non-formal learning”, which took place on Thursday 5 November 2020, 14:30-16:00 CET on Zoom

The recordings of the event can be accessed [here](#). More information about the project can be found [here](#). Further down is also a reference to the final conference on RPL.

Online event “Smart UAS in Smart Regions: increasing the strategic cooperation between Professional Higher Education and regions in Europe”, November-December 2020, online

EURASHE, together with the independent group of experts Friends of Smart Specialisation organised the online event “Smart UAS in Smart Regions: increasing the strategic cooperation between Professional Higher Education and regions in Europe” in the autumn 2020, with the aim of providing a platform to discuss a strengthened role for PHE institutions in the design and implementation of Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3s). The series of webinars, which will continue in the autumn 2021, focused on different European countries or regions, providing an overview of the implemented S3 as well as case studies of successful involvement of PHE institutions.

The series were kicked-off with two webinars, dedicated to:

- Portugal, on Tuesday 17 November 2020, 10:30-12:30 CET. Report available [here](#);
- The Basque Country, on 2 December 2020, 15:00-16:30 CET. Report available [here](#).

Both webinars underlined how professional higher education institutions, by virtue of their strong links to their region, can play a key role in the definition of the S3 and in addressing the needs of their regions. This is carried through both in terms of providing students with the skills needed to tackle these needs and in acting as regional agents that build bridges and alliances with other knowledge institutions, the business community and regional entities. However, to achieve this, PHE institutions need to be bolder and more proactive, taking advantage of the opportunities that are offered to them, especially in view of the programming period 2021-2027.

The recordings of online event are available [here](#). More information can be found [here](#).

EURASHE PHE Club on funding opportunities, 19 February 2021, online

COVID-19 outbreak has dramatically shaken the global professional higher education sector creating a lot of challenges for teachers, students, institutions' leadership and the regions. To react to the existing health crisis, EURASHE launched a platform to provide member institutions and associations with a weekly opportunity to exchange experiences and challenges in a more informal way. From 2020 May, EURASHE hosted seven "PHE@Home Club" meetings and discussed various emerging issues ranging from research students' engagement to digital transformation, work-based learning and others.

After the last year's success, the Club's meetings came back in 2021 under the new name of PHE Club. This year's meetings will correspond to developments of the Coronavirus crisis, the European Commission's agenda and programmes, EURASHE's strategic priorities and agenda.

The first PHE Club meeting took place on 19 February 2021 and was dedicated to funding opportunities for PHE institutions within the new set of European programmes. Invited experts presented an overview of the main programmes, with a particular focus on the Next Generation EU recovery fund and Horizon Europe and discussed the best methodology to use when approaching EU-funded calls.

The next meeting of the PHE Club will take place on 30 April 2021 and will be dedicated to the topic of micro-credentials.

More information can be found [here](#).

Final Conference of the RPLip project "Recognition of Prior Learning in Higher Education", 16 March 2021, online

EURASHE, together with its partners from the RPLip project, organised the project's final conference "Recognition of Prior Learning in Higher Education" on 16 March 2021 as a fully online event.

More than 240 RPL practitioners working in teaching, learning, research, policy or management and individuals working at higher education institutions, national ministries, and quality assurance agencies participated in the online event. Together, they discussed the benefits, challenges and best practices of successful implementation of RPL in Europe. The results of the projects were also presented to the audience.

The view of key actors and stakeholders on future developments, opportunities and key issues for the full implementation of RPL at institutional level, as well as attractiveness and challenges for students were shared in the final panel discussion "Present and future perspectives on RPL", moderated by Michal Karpíšek, EURASHE Secretary-General. Panellists were also asked to give their comments to the report

summarising the results from the survey “Mapping Institutional Experiences of Recognition of Prior Learning in Higher Education” which was conducted by EURASHE, in the framework of the RPLip project, in the autumn 2019. The report can be accessed [here](#).

The recordings of the event as well as more information on the project can be found [here](#).

EURASHE Dialogue Platform of European Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS), 17 March 2021, online

On 17 March 2020, EURASHE hosted the first meeting of its Dialogue Platform of European Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS). The platform was set up to further support professional higher education – hereafter PHE – institutions within the pilot European Universities alliances and to facilitate the exchange of experiences and views on specific PHE-related issues.

Invited experts shared their personal views on the topics of long-term strategies, funding, student engagement and PHE-specifics in the context of the European Universities initiative – hereafter EUI. It was discussed that the European Commission has very ambitious goals for the initiative, but that these are not on par with the current funding and evaluation processes. Representatives pointed out the need for more funding, in order to support alliances formulating their long-term strategies.

Discussions during the breakout sessions highlighted how all the participating alliances recognise the need for long-term strategies, and have great plans and ambitions on how to serve their regions and societies. A number of policy-related issues including the legal position of the alliances, funding and quality assurance in the European context should be addressed in the coming period. The level of established student engagement varies greatly among the alliances, with the biggest challenge being how to encourage non-traditional students to participate, particularly working students.

The meeting was attended by 27 participants and included representatives from the ATHENA, E3UDRES2, EELISA, Eut, RUN-EU and ULYSSEUS alliances.

More information [here](#).

FUTURE EVENTS

EURASHE 30th Annual Conference “Professional Higher Education and sustainable development: creating a change that endures”, 20-21 May 2021, online

The concept of sustainable development, which is fundamental for the European Union, is based on a large holistic approach to a whole range of interlinked global challenges. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) plot out a route on how to overcome the challenges we face, and to improve our habitat, our economy and our lives. They shape all EU internal and external policies and steer the implementation of the seven-year EU budget. It is amply acknowledged that the achievement of the SDGs will not be possible without education, and not the latest Professional Higher education (hereafter PHE), significant involvement in the cause. Thus, five years after the setting out of Agenda 2030, it is important to analyse the experience accumulated and to draw the way forward.

EURASHE 30th Annual Conference under the title **“Professional Higher Education for Sustainable Development: Creating a Change that Endures” will take place on 20-21 May, 2021 virtually**, and will be structured along the five pillars of Agenda 2030: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnerships. The

purpose of the conference is to build up a set of Specific Recommendations and discuss a potential Action Plan for their implementation by professional higher education and its stakeholders over the next years.

EURASHE Annual Conferences each year attracts a diversity of delegates – heads of institutions, higher education practitioners, business representatives, policy-makers, academics and students – from the education community across Europe and beyond its borders. It is recognised as a communication platform for education experts and professionals, and is characterised by its practical, innovating and stimulating approach.

This year's EURASHE Annual Conference is co-organised together with its member the Portuguese Polytechnics Coordinating Council (CCISP), the Polytechnic of Porto and with the support of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU. Almost 300 participants have already secured their virtual seats and confirmed keynote speakers are: **Commissioner Mariya Gabriel** (video message), **Commissioner Elena Ferreira**, **Anita Lehtikoinen**, Permanent Secretary of the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture and **Sandrine Dixson-Declève**, Co-President of the Club of Rome.

More information about this year's EURASHE Annual Conference, including programme, speakers and networking opportunities, can be found [here](#). Please find the link to register [here](#). While EURASHE non-members are expected to contribute by a small fee, the EC, governmental and BFUG consultative members representatives may benefit from a fee waiver.

EURASHE PHE Club on micro-credentials, 30 April 2021, online

The offer of micro-credentials in the European Higher Education Area has grown significantly over the past few years and is expected to keep growing over the next years as a response to a rising demand for flexible, short term learning opportunities to cater to a wider group of learners.

Micro-credentials also fall under one of the key priorities of the European Commission (EC) and is included in the achievement of the European Education Area by 2025, the European Skills Agenda and the Digital Education Action Plan. As part of its work on the European approach to micro-credentials, the EC is launching an Open Public Consultation (OPC, expected April – June 2021) to prepare for a Council Recommendation on micro-credentials by the end of 2021.

On Friday 30 April 2021, EURASHE will dedicate the second meeting of its PHE Club to the topic of micro-credentials, gathering together representatives from its member institutions to collect input, feedback and experiences, which will feed into an upcoming statement for the Commission's OPC.

Confirmed speakers are:

- Klara Engels-Perenyi – Policy Officer, Higher Education unit DG EAC, European Commission
- Anthony Camilleri – Director, Knowledge Innovation Centre
- Robert Plummer – Senior Adviser, Business Europe
- Denise Amyot – President, Colleges and Institutes Canada

More information will be soon published [here](#).

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