

**National priority statement – Czech Republic**

**Praha, 30th August 2016**

(Max - 2pages – this is draft for discussion. We have to deliver final version of this document to the Slovenia meeting 28. 9 – 1.10)

1. **Introduction**

According to terms of PROCSEE project the newly established National Committee for PHE Excellence (NCPHEE) met and discussed topics that project PROCSEE opens within a pre-defined four areas for which the project individually have selected its experts.

Meeting was attended by representatives of the world of work, Higher education Institutions, Universities, Tertiary professional schools and also student´s chamber. A detailed list of participants attached.

1. **Answering questions**

The objective of the session was to summarize current developments and also answer to the identified issues:

* 1. **What level of development is the country at with respect to the area being discussed? (early-stage, developing, mature, advanced?)**
* It should be noted that PHE is a topic in the Czech Republic for more than 20 years, but during that time discussion did not moved significantly ahead. Literally when discussing the PHE meaning and development, we could say that sometimes it was the time of "missed opportunities."
* The separate system for professionally oriented Higher Education Institutions of the non-university type could not have been established. (There are only 2 PHEIs law-based currently). Also the objective and proper mechanisms could not have been set. Change of funding and search for new indicators is still not in sight.
* Today with four new projects administered by CASPHE (PROCSEE, BuildPHE, Beehives, and SAPS) along with partners throughout Europe, there seems to be a good opportunity to move forward ....
* In the 1990s when CASPHE and EURASHE were founded (as the political representation of the sector), the system was more or less binary – on one hand the universities, on the other hand the non-universities with professional profiling. It was black and white and clear. Currently the PHE sector is undergoing, same as whole society, dramatic changes. Even renowned schools (i.e. VŠCHT- University of Chemistry and Technology in Prague) are now considering expanding of its profiles. The professionally oriented bachelor's programs have been and still are the core and basis, however in many countries (including the Czech Republic) there are also growing professionally oriented master´s programs.
* General agreement is that the connection between the PHE and the world of work is the key issue, which is not always clearly set and understood by all of the stakeholders - employers, schools and students.
* There are also some sectors where everything works relatively well – e.g. health professions (nurses). These sectors quite fulfil almost everything needed - working closely with the world of work, placements etc. They are involved in policy making, communicating with employers on the development, research, etc.
* Tertiary professional schools – the problem is - they are embedded in regional education system. This might make an impression, that they are even a burden for regions. From TPS´s perspective there is an absence of a law specifically dedicated to them and their activities. They have no anchor.
* Some of formerly proposed tools, such as tax relief for employers, have yet questionable effects. They are helping somewhere, but not everywhere are positively accepted.
* The world of private schools is also very underestimated and its not really reflected. They often meet the definition of PHE schools. But due to their “privacy” their focus on PHE is often lost behind and unseen. They should also be part of this discussion.
* There is no basic mission established for Tertiary professional schools. What should they do – there is a Law, some decrees, we have the accreditation commission etc… Yet except the healthcare sector, there is no agreement what is good and beneficial, what should be financed by state.
* The entire system of PHE resists opening “to the world”, on all sides. There are barriers going all the way back to Austria-Hungary empire perspective on education. There is no long-term concept.

* 1. **In an ideal world, what future scenario would participants desire, vis-a-vis the area being discussed?**
* The key-debate is on the definition of standards.
* It is necessary to respect smart employers. Everything in the world is rapidly changing. The communicative and adaptable graduates are needed.
* There is no other solution than that the world of work and schools will live together and cooperate.
* The ideal situation is that the school has a designated employee only to communicate with world of work. The responsible person listens every day to the needs and identifies priorities (not once in a while, but continually).
* It is important to gain experience from European instruments – initially there was scepticism – especially in the Czech Republic, which is known always by finding “its own way”, still time has shown to us the relative functionality of these instruments (EQC, ECVET etc.).
* Employers should ideally teach more at schools, be present at schools / but this is blocked by Accreditation legislation again etc. If they don´t have prescribed publications, they cannot officially guarantee quality of teaching…
* There should be strengthening the role of “professional regulators”, who closely and continuously monitor their own sector. They can be very useful e.g. within Accreditation commissions.
* The ideal situation is to find a somehow “functional present” under current legislation, but also continue finding a long-term vision, where this sector should be oriented.
* Bridge the gap between private and public schools.
* Definitely, tertiary professional schools sector should not be lost as a whole, but its healthy core should be used.
* There is a complete consensus on the necessary separation of the general education and vocational education. E.g. during high school one could get qualifications as bricklayer, tiler, painter etc. – however high school diploma as well, separately. Therefore if one is not successful in “maturita”- school leaving examination, the qualification reached can be used for work purposes. Two levels next to each other.
* Open more the whole system, it is too closed. It is true for both – schools and employers.
* It is necessary to respond to modern challenges, digitalization. We have to focus on common fields – e.g. in the context of e-learning (as the first step of provision) and following already more specific seminars (as the second step) etc.. The virtual world will soon completely change education – which must become a challenge rather than barrier.
* Sharing quality school curricula - so they are ready and adjusted to the needs of new era.
* There should be a strong emphasis on the quality of teachers, especially within PHE. They must understand what are they teaching in the context of practice.
* Setting up truly long-term goals and priorities (but not to forget the short term goals and functionality as well).
* Develop a study of work systems, processes and competencies. E.g. “Ideal employee – now we know e.g. what “perfect nurse” means.

**Purely formal question at the end**

* Isn´t it too much effort to “control” PHE sector contra-productive? We have (Czech Republic) 350 regulated professions (Denmark 15) …
  1. **What barriers are holding back this ideal future scenario?**
* We have to say, that most universities are not interested to participate in PHE – in Czech Republic we are amongst the worst results from this point of view.
* Weak communication between the education sector and employers.
* The employer often has no interest in employment of students – because they have very limited capabilities – still students are also not willing to work, especially manual work. Based on these experiences - it is a vicious circle that has developed into the current status.
* Neither side (student and employer) knows what to do. And school is not preparing student for work.
* The key is to change the negative perception of the word “qualification” in both academics – for them placement is something “inferior” and employer perspective – on the other hand, they don´t need some “stupid slaves”. There should be quality general education (but this doesn´t mean encyclopaedic knowledge). Employers need educated and independent graduates. There is plenty room for PHE schools. Our future is full of major changes in Industry (Industry 4.0. will possible not be called industry, yet everything will be still produced and manufactured) – production will be back in Europe – such is the assumption of foreign experts.
* Our time is changing - people will work till 70 years old. There is no young person who wants to start working when 19…
* We must emphasize, that not everyone will and can be manager, director or academic. We have to diversify and set criteria for quality standards. Good craftsman is worthy of admiration, there is no reason to look down upon him.
* We identify fundamental lack of interest of employers in discussion with schools – there are many factors why – management of companies is mostly just short-term (3-5 years), mostly they need only acute solutions, they are not planning that far ahead etc.
* There are also problems with basic student literacy in basic live skills. Life is now much heavier (complicated) than before, but general education is not taking this into account. The provision lags behind with its teaching methods there are no longer functioning. The lectures might seem even too dull for the nowadays´ students.
  1. **Who are the key players in making this ideal future scenario happen?**
* Within PROCSEE project we hereby establish regional centre for PHE excellence. Its activities must always be closely linked to the needs and demands of the world of work.
* The key players remain, of course, schools and employers. Previously neglected, but yet crucial players are students. Within then rapidly changing trends schools are often lagging behind students’ needs and interest. On the other side, many of the students do not even meet the basic prerequisites for a successful career.
* Significant role is also played by “diversion” (small sabotage) – examples of good practice beyond the traditional and official framework. They can point the way…
* However, crucial role remains in the hands of political representation, only they can put theory really into practice.