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Priorities of CZECH PHE sector
conclusions
and future of PROCSEE recommendations

Project:
**Strengthening Professional Higher Education and HVET in Central & South Eastern Europe
(PROCSEE)**

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Introduction:

PHE has been a topic in the Czech Republic for more than 20 years now. Yet during that time the discussion has not significantly moved ahead. In terms of the role of PHE and its rationale within the higher education system, this has been the period most suitably described as the time of "missed opportunities."

The separate sector for professionally oriented higher education institutions of the non-university type has not been fully successfully implemented; There are only 2 public Professional Higher Education Institutes (PHEIs) and around 40 private Higher Education Institutes (HEIs), but they comprise less than 10% of student enrolments. Neither within this sector or in general the specific objectives and mechanisms for PHE have not been set. Both funding mechanisms and quality assurance procedures are still mainly oriented towards academic teaching and research.

The newly established National Committee for PHE Excellence (NCPHEE) first met on 30th August 2016 in Prague and discussed topics that project PROCSEE raises.

The committee met 3 times and was followed by many consultations with relevant national stakeholders - representatives of the world of work – Confederation of Industry of Czech Republic and Chamber of Commerce, Higher education Institutions, Universities, Tertiary professional schools (Higher Vocational Schools) and also students and Professional Employees Association.

In this document we summarize the main recommendations and we are setting up (our as Association's) the vision for the near future.

MAIN CZECH CONCLUSIONS FOR THEMATIC AREAS AND MAIN RECOMMENDATION

(MORE DETAILED CONCLUSIONS FOR EACH THEMATIC AREA FOLLOW)

Main Lessons learned in general

According to reactions from our partners/stakeholders, this is the first time that a project is dealing with the problematical issues, which they also experience, in depth – in all 4 areas of PROCSEE.

Our Association is now one of the most important stakeholders in CZ, in the field of PHE. PROCSEE has been one of the few steps which has helped build this position.

- Low recognition of PHE and PHE is not priority for government
- We are facing short termism in educational policy – ad hoc projects with low sustainability (lack of financial and "human" resources)
 - many good practises but lack of sharing and coordination
- Projects as PROCSEE open doors to stakeholders and for policy consultations, it is good beginning of the long way

TA1 - Alignment of PHE with regional, local and economic development strategies

Main Activities Our Association in next years:

- Building of regional stakeholders' networks
- Eg. Project aimed at curricula development with regional stakeholders' involvement at a big regional university

Our Main Demands from Government:

- Involvement of regional dimension into quality assurance and funding measures/instruments

TA2 - Promotion of PHE in responding to skill shortages

Main Activities Our Association in next years

- Interlinking PHE sector and chambers of commerce

Our Main Demands from Government

- Establish better coordination between ministry of education and other ministries (high sectarianism)

TA3 - Organisation and monitoring student placements in the World of Work

Main Activities Our Association in next years

- Development of environments and instruments for PHE-business cooperation (placements, mentoring, toolkits)

Our Main Demands from Government

- Systematic involvement of student placements and its quality in accreditation process

TA4 Personal Learning Environments in PHE

Main Activities Our Association in next years

- Support for networking of educational institutions and PLE environments (via conference)

Our Main Demands from Government

- Recognition of modularisation and prior learning (qualification units)

GENERALLY

Main Activities Our Association in next years

- Sustainability of previous projects in the „reality“

Our Main Demands from Government

- Complex PHE policy
- Clarification of accreditation of „professional profile“ study programmes
- Reflection of lessons learnt from project in future – operational grants

SEPARATE CONCLUSIONS FOR THEMATIC AREAS

→ TA1 - Alignment of PHE with regional, local and economic development strategies



Expert: Karel Šíma

Strengthening the Regional Development Role of the Czech Professional Higher Education

- Involvement of the regional dimension into both institutional and project funding schemes for higher education is needed.
- Regional dimension should be incorporated into legislation on higher education, especially act on higher education and relevant quality assurance regulations (issued by The National Accreditation Bureau for Higher Education, NABHE)
- On institutional level, PHEIs should prioritize regional engagement into their quality assurance procedures that are developed due to the new legislation on quality assurance
- Measurement of regional engagement (including indicators) should be developed on national level and considered when developing existing and new policy instruments (funding schemes, institutional plans).
- PHEIs should be vital part of negotiation, setting and implementation of regional policies (Regional Innovation Strategies, regional long-term plans in education and other).
- The implementation of professional study programs as stated by the new legislative regulations should be implemented on wide basis and with regional role involved (NABHE). Ministry should run funding schemes to help develop these programs (eg. for traineeships, engaged learning, research/innovation with regional impact).
- Ministry should set priorities for regions with underrepresented groups, motivate prospective applicants with this background and support study offer in these regions.
- There is significant mismatch between different regional policies both on governmental level and in case of regional authorities. Regional development strategies should be better informed by regional data and should be harmonized across different sectors in order to generate synergies, especially in case of regional structural funds from EU.
- The ministry should support involvement of practitioners from world of work into teaching in professional study programmes.
- There should be initiative to define and support leadership in PHE that involve regional engagement competencies.

- Quality assurance of professional study programmes should include relevant external stakeholders, in accreditation of study programmes by NABHE or by HEIs in case of having right to accredit their own study programmes.

→ **TA2 - Promotion of PHE in responding to skill shortages**



In the Czech Republic, professional higher education (PHE) is largely undervalued and, in consequence, lowly visible although in reality it probably represents a very substantial part of those segments of educational system that are considered higher education (EQF 5-8). A work by a study group appointed by the Czech Rector's Conference in 2012 estimated that approximately 70 per cent of degree programmes at Czech higher education institutions were professionally-oriented. A legislative intervention in 2015 (an amendment to the national Higher Education Act) introduced professional student programmes as a distinct type of degree. However, the progress in the area has been slow.

Despite limited legislative changes, the area of PHE namely remains dispersed, and both higher education institutions (universities and professional higher education institutions) and vocational education schools (governed by legislation pertaining otherwise to elementary and secondary schools) are responsible for PHE provision. In result, there is still no coherent strategy from the national government. Also regional government remain passive, while legally having a say in respect of vocational education schools.

In the absence of a coherent and intelligible strategy or concept, a number of local/institutional initiative have taken place but their impact is obviously limited. At the same time, the importance of PHE in provision of not only initial formal education but also of upskilling and reskilling of population will further grow.

1. Proposed Operational Plans

- a) Review and improve collection of data on performance of all educational institutions operating at EQF 5-8 levels so as to inform policy development
- b) Utilize the umbrella of the expected new national educational policy strategy for period 2020 – 2030 to set the agenda for PHE
- c) Adopt a position towards the prospective use of EQF 5 qualification in the national qualifications system
- d) Facilitate permeability between higher education institutions and vocational education schools (as already foreseen by law) and encourage formal collaborations / networks between higher education institutions and vocational education schools
- e) In implementing new legislation on higher education quality assurance, develop a framework or standard for dialogue between higher education institutions and the world of work in respect of development and evaluation of quality of PHE qualifications
- f) Involve associations in higher education and associations representing the world of work in establishing a national forum to discuss perspectives and challenges of PHE

→ TA3 Organization and monitoring student placements in the World of Work



1. Summary

The ideal higher educational system reflects the needs of the labour market, and it is improving dynamically and constantly in response to the social-economical changes. Various providers try to make the synchronization of educational process and world of work and cooperate with it to enable easier adaption of alumni's for the work. We can see here three main sort of activities: placement activities organized by employers (communication, mentoring), by educational institutions (implementation needs of world of work into school curricula) and activities of world of work concerning the study content (technical equipment to schools, work in the school boards etc.), there is the fourth activity as well: continues monitoring of needs of students and world of work and continues quality control.

There are the fourth main problems to be solved:

- Define roles for all PHE stakeholders in placements
- Quality placements control
- Consider the voice of Students
- Know the demands of employers

What we need: The government should accept the importance of this problems and fix this meaning in its strategies, create new laws and regulations, establish mechanism for cooperation among schools and world of work, establish balanced the position of school not to get just service organization for firms.

Consequently, the main demands against the government are the followings:

1. Answer the main questions: What are need of the society and world of work? What sort of education should create Higher professional area?
2. To create the new accreditation board with new standards for accreditation in which higher education institutions and short cycles education institutions will be a part of higher education system (together with universities) with special attention on the involvement of industry actors.
3. Create cooperative platform and structure between education and world of work supported by the government (establish aims, system of activities and processes, practical tools)

2. Proposed operational plans

Set placements into strategy development plans of educational institutions and as an object of quality control.

Nominate a "placement manager" as an interface between students, stakeholders and the world of work a "product manager" of the study program.

Involve students in work placement processes (choosing, competing for the best practical training) and to give students motivation and responsibility of their own training. Involve alumni's into this process as well.

Provide a framework for learning outcomes tailored for the work-placement, as part of curricula.

Create quality tools (handbooks, manuals) for all stakeholders (for placement managers for mentors and tutors) for the common use of all needed institutions.

Set up the system with all needed element for fulfilling the quality parameters of placement based on the best study cases and EU experiences as a long term strategy.

Create the strategy and the platform for the results of relevant EU projects and know how sparing an exchange as a part of operational plans (schools, government chamber of commerce etc.)

→ TA 4 - Personal Learning Environments in PHE



With the tradition of long-term or even permanent jobs disappearing and with the new qualifications springing into existence with the industry 4.0 introduction and implementation there is an ever increasing and imposing need for qualification broadening and life-long learning system (r)evolution. We strongly believe that a personalised learning environment (PLE) within professional higher education (PHE) plays a crucial role in achieving the afore-mentioned goal and its absence hinders the advance of PHE on a very alarming scale.

Within the Czech Republic we can see several points that might be addressed by an efficiently executed PLE.

- 1. Recognition of prior learning.** All learners arrive to the PHE institutions equipped with a wide variety of skills based on their formal, informal as well as non-formal education. All of these are highly important for the person's professional profile and are valid contributions of their professional portfolio. The PHE institutions, however, rarely put these into consideration when placing learners into study programmes or offering individual study plans. There is an urgent need for the unified system of experience, skill, knowledge and competence evidence. Accepted by all levels of educational system and compatible with current LMS and/or informational systems on at least export/import level to ensure a chance of the study path to be recorded, structured and analysed by both learner, PHI and employers (should the learner wish so). It would be highly efficient to use the current systems and improve them where necessary (Europass, ECVET...) rather than keep developing new ones as is the current trend in the CR.
- 2. Use modular systems to match the fast-changing occupational profiles, competence frameworks and skillsets.** The industry 4.0 brings vast changes into many aspects of professional life but it does not happen overnight. While the companies match their processes with the market and are usually up to the task in due time, the PHEI are often dramatically lacking behind due to their slow reaction time (among other things). A well designed modular system is able to address the current requirements of the professional skill and competence training while avoiding the slow process of curricular changes and approval of the corresponding body (NAÚ for instance). The modular system can also be of great help with recognition of prior learning implementation since the adjustment of the study plan to incorporate the prior learning can be made on modular rather than programme level. Again use of systems-to-be is highly preferable over any new system unless it comes from government level ensuring wide acceptance.
- 3. Quality and excellence recognition.** While quality assurance is currently under diligent scrutiny in Czech HE on institutional level, its recognition on personal level along with

excellence promotion is systematically non-existent. The PLE consists of changes that need personal promotion of institutional torch bearers who inspire and ignite their colleagues who are otherwise prone to maintaining the tested and non-disturbing status quo. A teaching quality network designed and promoted by authorities, inspired by industry and supported by all stakeholders will mean a great step towards encouraging personal time and energy investments. A reward system for excellent innovative teachers would also be a highly effective tool.

4. **Use and development of national PLE tools and infrastructures.** For PLE to work as a cross-level platform it needs to be as universally flexible and recognised as possible. We believe that it could be aided by government supervision (establish and maintain on national and international levels – technology, network, services) and active use of already existing systems in the CR (i.e. NSK) which existence is backed by years of work, expertise and professional feedback from various stakeholders.