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## **PROCSEE DELIVERABLE**

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## **Priority Statement 2019-2021**

### **Toward Building and Developing PHE in Romania**

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2. PHE in Romania: Top Priorities and Recommendations
3. Sustainability and Development of the Romanian Center for PHE Excellence

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## 1. PHE in Romania: Context and Specific Challenges

According to the [EURASHE typology of PHE systems in Europe](#), Romania has a **unitary system of Higher Education**, characterized by no formal distinction between professional and academic higher education providers. The Romanian system features programs that are affiliated to, or integrated into a “comprehensive institution”, and programs with a Vocational or Professional focus next to academic ones – sometimes without making formal differences between them.

Each university decides the identity and the focus of the programs in relation to various regulative frameworks, such as quality assurance agencies, which have standard evaluation criteria pertaining to adaptation of specializations to the demands of the labor market.

Given this context, several strengths and weaknesses emerge. The main **strength** is the openness for cooperation of a great part of the actors and agents involved: PHE institutions, regulatory bodies, and business representatives. Romanian universities have high motivation to offer market-oriented programmes in order to increase popularity with students (in the context of demographic changes, leading to a decreasing number of undergraduate students).

Current **weaknesses** are related to the system’s resistance to change. Regarding the regulatory framework for PHE, this sector is weakened by: the lack of coherent strategies for PHE education at the national and regional level (as well as poor alignment to European strategies in the field), poorly defined PHE-related concepts and insufficient coherence of PHE-related regulations. Additionally, some soft issues related to communication between stakeholders need to be address with urgency (e.g. distant relations between PHE institutions and employers’ representatives, the difficulties in attracting students towards technical education). Lastly, there are some issues regarding monitoring & controlling (e.g. internships are not subjected to strict monitoring and controlling on behalf of the authorities).

The **challenges** to be overcome include, first and foremost, the need to harmonize stakeholders’ expectations. At the moment, there is relatively low level of agreement between various stakeholders regarding the opportunity to distinguish, institutionally, between PHE and AHE (a tendency to maintain the *Status Quo – the unitary system*). Consequently, there is need to organize broader, nation-wide consultations, initiated by the Ministry of Education, regarding the opportunity to give a distinct institutional identity to PHE. Secondly, the matter of perceived status must be overcome. Distinguishing between PHE and AHE is perceived as being risky by

traditional universities. The latter fear that formalizing the PHE sector means acknowledging that AHE performs badly in terms of ensuring graduates' employability and connection with practice, with unwanted consequences on the enrollment rates.

Other challenges include: financial limitations (only around 3% of the state budget is directed towards the education sector), and a less-than-ideal relation between PHE providers and the labor market (slow adaptation of the curricula to the transformations and innovations on the constantly changing and evolving labor market).

## **2. PHE in Romania: Top Priorities and Recommendations**

Given the aforementioned legal context, the strengths, limitations, and challenges for the PHE sector in Romania, the following ten mid-term priorities emerge (*their order does not imply ranking based on perceived importance*):

### **1. Distinguish between AHE and PHE**

#### ***Concrete recommendations for implementation***

- Implement nation-wide consultations on the opportunity to distinguish between a). PHE institutions with a strong, national focus & doing state-of-the-art research, and b). universities with a strong focus on local/regional development, which should consider the specificity of the regional industry in their academic offer
- Debate existing legislation, which provides basis for an overlap between colleges providing qualifications up to level 5 of the EQF, and universities which are now allowed to provide short-term trainings

### **2. Revise qualification framework**

#### ***Concrete recommendations for implementation***

- Provide level 5 EQF qualifications (the pre-Bologna colleges) within higher education
- Improve standardization of the learning outcomes of any qualification, clearly defining what a student knows, and is capable of doing (professionally) at the end of the educational programme
- Rethink the learning outcomes of educational programmes with the involvement of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

### **3. Adapt to regional needs**

#### ***Concrete recommendations for implementation***

- Conduct relevant studies on the mid-term perspectives for the economic strategies within a specific area, in order to allow PHE providers to adapt their offer to realistic economical and demographical projections
- PHEIs should be fully aware of the official regional development strategies of Romania and align their educational offer to these documents

### **4. Formalize and provide a better regulatory framework for student placements**

#### ***Concrete recommendations for implementation***

- Make collaboration protocols mandatory and binding all parties: PHE providers, students and employers to balance the asymmetry of power
- Define learning objectives by each PHE institution, to particularize criteria according to each type of organization/industry/business case etc.
- Accommodate larger periods of practice (> two weeks) within the academic year

### **5. Acknowledge and improve personalized learning**

#### ***Concrete recommendations for implementation***

- Target students at risk of abandoning their undergraduate studies, and vulnerable groups in general
- Ensure flexibility through different optional modules according to student's interests. The modules could have a more practical approach than the core academic courses.
- Implement "learn how to learn" trainings. In order to let the student be in charge for his educational path, he should exercise critical thinking, transversal abilities, and creativity.
- Reform the Centers for career guidance: clearer roles of their staff; clearer targets; predefined structure at national level

### **6. Foster partnerships between PHEIs and the world of work**

#### ***Concrete recommendations for implementation***

- Alter the criteria for practitioners to become part of the faculty (operationalize of the distinction between academics and practitioners that are part of the academic staff)
- Use surveys/ questionnaires to consult employers from the industry on the knowledge/skills/abilities needed for each qualification

## **7. Define the scope and mission of PHE**

### ***Concrete recommendations for implementation***

- Conduct nation wide-consultations on the mission of PHE – namely, should PHE focus on facilitating the transition from social sciences/humanities to technical specialisations (create instruments to prevent failure), or from colleges to higher education institutions.?
- Conduct nation wide-consultations on the opportunity of distinguishing between practice-driven educational programmes versus specialization and theory driven ones
- Conduct nationwide-consultation on the opportunity of distinguishing between technical and academic universities

## **8. Assess the outcomes of PHE: Tracing the employability of students**

### ***Concrete recommendations for implementation***

- Work towards implementing a national database, providing access to the employers, in order to obtain a bidirectional feedback about the employability of alumni.
- Envisage possible solutions for a tracking system between: any given work contract (in Romania there is a national data base with all those contracts), the occupational code inscribed on that contract, the code of the relevant education for filling the position and the name of the institutions providing that specific formation

## **9. Promote PHE as a legitimate education & career track**

### ***Concrete recommendations for implementation***

- Promote PHE and its prospective outcomes in terms of good job and good earning on the long run, in correlation with the regional economic development

- Promote PHE not only to prospective students, but also within the communities, teaching staff and families, in order to facilitate the decision making process when choosing between a theoretical or professional route in education
- Change social perception when it comes to highly skilled jobs in industry, manufacturing and agriculture as opposed to more „intellectual” desk jobs.

### **10. Focus on transversal competencies and life-long learning**

#### ***Concrete recommendations for implementation***

- Focus on developing entrepreneurial skills
- Foster the flexibility needed for life-long learning through distance learning: a mix of remote teaching methods and face to face meetings. Enable remote studies with participants from/ to other countries for particular courses
- Adapt teaching practices to include a strengthened professional component and focus on transversal competencies

## **3. Sustainability and Development of the Romanian Center for PHE**

### **Excellence**

None of the ten priorities for building PHE in Romania could become possible without a swift and thorough interaction between stakeholders.

For the mid-term perspective (2019-2021), we envisage the following collaborative opportunities to help advance the implementation of the concrete recommendations.

#### **National Government & National Parliament**

The *Ministry of Education* is the most suitable actor to support a nation-wide debate over public policies in PHE and the implementations of measures to develop professional education in Romania. Experts can participate in workshops and conferences to analyze the current state of the field and discuss possible directions of intervention. The ministry can promote a continuing professional development for teachers and support the review of learners’ progress and achievement. The ministry, in collaboration with other branches of the government (e.g. Ministry of Labour) can help track student placements in the world of work and collaborate with the National Institute of Statistics to provide data and identify problem areas that need official interventions. A national strategy in terms of educational development could contribute

to redefining the current teaching methods that focus more on the teacher than on the learner, and instead, focus on improving skills and on creating an attractive educational environment, in connection to the labor market.

The *Strategic Management and Public Policy Unit* within the Ministry of Education can support new policy proposals for PHE and offer counseling from a legislative perspective based on previous work knowledge.

As a rector of the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, *Remus Pricopie*, former Minister of Education 2012-2014, supported the implementation of the PROCSEE project in Romania. As such, he can act as a strong promoter of the PROCSEE approach in the Romanian public sphere.

Experts from the *Chamber of Deputies, Commission for Education, science, youth and sports, Romanian Parliament* can chair and participate in dedicated events, and offer valuable recommendations for policy development.

## **Regulating Bodies**

*The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS)* will target policies and strategies of continuous improvement in the quality of higher education. Experts can share their experience by participating in conferences, round tables and debates over PHE policy proposals, and by supporting rectors in the implementation of adequate measures. The institution should continue to produce and disseminate systematic information about quality standards, and contribute, together with the PHE institutions, in developing national standards for evaluating PHE programs.

*The Executive Unit for Financing Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation (UEFISCDI)* organizes competitions and subsequently monitors the projects accepted for financing. UEFISCDI could support the development of PHE by opening a line of financing for research and policy documentation on professional higher education and monitor the progress of research in this area. The universities could collaborate on joint research grants to study the distinctive features of PHE in Romania on the long term and propose informed policies and legislative changes to help creating an institutional base for PHE development. As UEFISCDI promotes the European and the international cooperation in terms of research, open grants for international partnerships will facilitate international best practices exchange. These

types of collaborative consortiums could allow for the identification of models to be studied in a Romanian context, and adjusted for subsequent implementation.

The *National Authority for Qualifications* is another important actor when it comes to public policy, as there is a need for revising the qualifications framework.

*The Institute of Education Sciences* (unit under the institutional umbrella of the Ministry of Education) aims to actively contribute to educational innovation through expertise, training, education and research. The Institute's mission is to provide the scientific support required by the latest approaches in education, and therefore, a partnership with the universities for research and policy development on PHE will benefit all the parties involved. The Institute could help promoting quality improvement and development of PHE.

### **World of work**

*The International Advertising Association (IAA)* can support the professional higher education in Romania by continuing to develop its project, *AcadimIAA*, a collaboration with the universities aimed at increasing the employability of graduates in the fields of marketing and communication. Professors and students benefit from Open day programs, and trainings to increase the collaboration between the universities and the industry. The program can be expanded by facilitating a series of internships in collaboration with partner agencies and companies, as well as providing career counseling and goal-oriented trainings for students. The program could expand to a broader area of connected study fields.

Besides IAA, *the Linkmann Communication, Galeriu & Partners PR, Autocobalcescu, CBRE România, Telekom, the Sectoral Committee for Financial, Banking and Insurance Activities* are all parties interested in the professional higher education in Romania and in helping students find appropriate jobs. All these companies could offer career counseling, internships and trainee positions for students, and they can collaborate with the universities by providing lectures and trainings.

### **PHE Institutions** (*Romanian public & private universities*)

As universities constantly improve and diversify their educational offer, providing post-graduate short-term programs or professional education could be a solution to replace less competitive programs and increase the level of satisfaction of the beneficiaries. As PHE

providers, universities can include programs with a strong practical/professional emphasis, ensuring flexibility to the current labor market requirements. These programs could include partnerships with key players from the industry, and a well-developed and comprehensive internship program for students.

As private universities in Romania focus mainly on teaching, joint research grants with companies and public universities on developing PHE could help them develop professional education programs, as well as facilitate research activities in this sector.

More specifically, *Politehnica University of Bucharest, the National University for Political Studies and Public Administration, Bucharest, the University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Bucharest, the Finnish Teacher Training Center, the European Institute in Romania, subordinated to the Ministry of Foreign Relations, the National Institute for Cultural Research and Training, subordinated to the Ministry of Culture* are PHE institutions which showed interest in the PROCSEE approach. Their interest should be cultivated in the future through joint activities and shared experiences.

### ***NGOs and Think Tanks***

*The Romanian Institute for Adult Education (IREA)*, which is a non-profit organization, aims at promoting the research and practice in adult education in Romania and Europe by supporting access to quality resources from collaborative research and practice. The organization positions itself as an interface between academics and practitioners. IREA could provide expertise and take part in research projects to identify policy challenges and directions for PHE to help develop this sector in Romania.

*The Think Tank G3A* could help monitor regional/local development strategies for PHE, as well as the expansion of such programs given the interest and the activity of the organization in the field of education. The experts could offer support in tracking student employment and thus, assess the efficiency of PHE programs.

Other organizations as the *HR Club* and *the Center for Education Policies* could provide guidance for students for a proper adjustment to the world of work, as well as counseling in assessing and developing PHE public policies.

### **Student representatives**

Students enrolled in tertiary education, as well as student representatives could take part in consultations and debates as they are the main beneficiaries of any PHE development. They can interact with enterprises and the world of work, and have a better understanding of employers' requirements in their field of interest. They could facilitate PHE analyses and assist the national level policy-makers in their endeavors.

## Annex

Overview of stakeholders consulted within the PROCSEE project 2016-2018

<b>Category</b>	<b>Institution</b>
Student representatives	Undergraduate and doctoral students, National University for Political Studies and Public Administration, Bucharest
World of work	Linkmann Communication Galeriu & Partners PR Autocobalcescu International Advertising Association CBRE România Telekom Sectoral Committee for Financial, Banking and Insurance Activities (Comitetul Sectorial pentru Activități Financiare, Bancare, de Asigurări)
National Government	Ministry of Education - OI POCU Remus Pricopie, former Minister of Education 2012-2014 Ministry of Education – Strategic Management and Public Policy Unit
National Parliament	Chamber of Deputies, Commission for Education, science, youth and sports, Romanian Parliament
Regulating Bodies	Executive Unit for Financing Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation (UEFISCDI) The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education National Authority for Qualifications
PHE Institutions	Politehnica University of Bucharest National University for Political Studies and Public Administration, Bucharest University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Bucharest Finnish Teacher Training Center European Institute in Romania, subordinated to the Ministry of Foreign Relations The National Institute for Cultural Research and Training, subordinated to the Ministry of Culture
NGOs	HR Club Center for Education Policies (Centrul pt Politici Educationale)



**Annex 2 of the Priority Statement 2019-2021. Toward Building and Developing PHE in Romania**

## **Action Plan for the Implementation of PHE Policy Recommendations in Romania**

<b>Action/ Recommendation</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Suggested timeframe for implementation</b>	<b>Institutions/ Actors</b>
Nation-wide debate over public policies in PHE	- Joint events: conferences, workshops, roundtables, consultative meetings, other public events, consultations with the general public - opinion surveys on the public perceptions on PHE reform - other	March 2019-June 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiator: Ministry of Education</li> <li>• Consulted/Praticipants: all relevant stakeholders</li> </ul>
Debate the revision of the qualification framework/ Rethink the learning outcomes of educational programmes	- Joint events: conferences, workshops, roundtables, consultative meetings discussing the opportunities for change/improvement	March 2019-June 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Education</li> <li>• Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education</li> <li>• National Authority for Qualifications</li> <li>• PHE institutions</li> </ul>
Conduct relevant studies on the mid-term perspectives for the economic strategies + Dissemination of results		June 2019 – December 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PHE institutions</li> <li>• National Government</li> </ul>
Align educational offer based on national& regional	- Constant improvement of existing curricula - design of new study programmes (BA/MA) according to national needs	September 2019-December 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PHE institutions</li> </ul>



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strategies & according to research results			
Improve the quality of student placements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Make collaboration protocols mandatory and binding all parties: PHE providers, students and employers to balance the asymmetry of power</li> <li>- Define learning objectives by each PHE institution, to particularize criteria according to each type of organization/industry/business case etc.</li> <li>- Advocate for the accommodation of larger periods of practice (&gt; two weeks) within the academic year</li> </ul>	September 2019-December 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PHE institutions (initiators)</li> <li>• World of work</li> <li>• Student representatives</li> </ul>
Acknowledge and improve personalized learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Implement “learn how to learn” trainings for students</li> <li>- Reform the Centres for career guidance</li> </ul>	September 2019-December 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PHE institutions</li> </ul>
Strengthen partnerships with the world of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- joint events</li> <li>- guest lectures throughout the academic year</li> </ul>	September 2019-December 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PHE institutions (initiators)</li> <li>• World of work</li> </ul>
Research on the needs of the industry & dissemination of results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- quantitative and qualitative research</li> </ul>	June 2019- June 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PHE institutions (initiators)</li> <li>• World of work</li> </ul>
Trace the employability of students to assess the performances of PHE + Dissemination of results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- quantitative and qualitative research</li> </ul>	July 2021- December 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PHE institutions</li> <li>• World of work</li> <li>• Students</li> <li>• Alumni</li> </ul>
Promote PHE as a legitimate education & career track	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- public events</li> <li>- online communication campaigns</li> </ul>	January 2020- December 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PHE institutions</li> <li>• Other relevant stakeholders</li> </ul>



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Focus on transversal competencies and life-long learning	- revise curricula to strengthen focus on transversal competencies - facilitate lifelong learning through distance learning	September 2019-December 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PHE institutions</li> <li>• Students</li> </ul>
Access research grants on relevant PHE-related areas (If available)		February 2019- December 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PHE institutions</li> <li>•</li> </ul>