



## The Object of the European Network for UAS

The European Network for UAS functions as an informal peer learning community for national associations for UAS (rectors' conferences) that want to work together on strengthening the profile of professionally oriented higher education and applied sciences within Europe. Therefore the aim of the network is to show what universities of applied sciences have to offer and to promote collaboration

- A between individual universities of applied sciences (education),
- B with the business sector, SMEs and the public sector (world of work), and
- C with policy makers from national authorities, the European Commission, Parliament and the Council (policy).

Today's participants are Ireland, Germany, Austria, The Netherlands, Switzerland, Finland, Estonia and Denmark.

## How You Can Contribute and Profit

The European Network for UAS observes that its activities are meeting the need from UAS for improved profiling and positioning at a European level. Based on this success, the network wants to broaden its activities and will focus on the following goals.

- ① Introducing benchmarks on core items of professionally oriented higher education for better profiling, preferably in collaboration with new participating countries
- ② Intensifying networking and the exchange of best practices between participants for their national and European positioning and learning
- ③ Offering a platform to promote new initiatives between individual UAS and between UAS and their partners from the world of work and policy
- ④ Working together to improve the quality of the sector

An active contribution from the UAS and their associations (rectors' conferences) is crucial for the functioning of the network. Success will further derive from good collaboration with the business sector, SMEs, the public sector and (regional) authorities. Therefore we invite these parties to play an active role in the activities undertaken by our network and to work with us on the achievement of joint objectives and initiatives. The network specifically invites the rectors' conferences for UAS to work with it on new, detailed benchmarks. You can keep up-to-date and contact us via our website [www.uasnet.eu](http://www.uasnet.eu)

**HBO-raad**

Netherlands Association  
of Universities of Applied Sciences  
[www.hbo-raad.nl](http://www.hbo-raad.nl)

**ARENE**

Rectors' Conference of Finnish  
Universities of Applied Sciences  
[www.arene.fi](http://www.arene.fi)

**IOTI**

Institutes of Technology Ireland  
[www.ioti.ie](http://www.ioti.ie)

**FHK**

Austrian Association of  
Universities of Applied Sciences  
[www.fhk.ac.at](http://www.fhk.ac.at)

**KFH**

Conference of the Universities  
of Applied Sciences Switzerland  
[www.kfh.ch](http://www.kfh.ch)

**HRK**

German Rectors' Conference  
[www.hrk.de](http://www.hrk.de)

**CVU-Rektorkollegiet Danish Rectors'**  
Conference of Centers for Higher  
Education  
[www.cvu-rk.dk](http://www.cvu-rk.dk)

**Rectors Conference**

of Professional Higher Education  
Institutions, Estonia  
[www.tktk.ee](http://www.tktk.ee)

[www.uasnet.eu](http://www.uasnet.eu)



# **European Network for Universities of Applied Sciences:**

**making sure that knowledge works!**

# Europe asks

Political Europe has identified a number of important social issues and is taking action on them.

In 2010, 50% of the professional population must consist of individuals with a higher level of education and up-to-date competencies for the labour market. Better use must be made of innovative knowledge: for innovations in professional practice and for the social and economic good. Added to this, emphasis will be placed on the development of regions as the basis for innovation and cross-border collaboration. Europe also recognises the importance of a balanced socio-economic society.

The European business sector, SMEs and the public sector need employees with a higher level of education.

Knowledge and competencies of employees must be better aligned to the fast-changing and complex professional practice. It is vital that employees have an educational background that enables them to use their knowledge specifically for innovation that is applicable immediately.

## Universities of Applied Sciences Respond

The universities of applied sciences (UAS) are responding to these challenges from the EU and the business sector, because they are professionally-oriented higher education institutions that are committed to the following:

### Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning

The UAS are responsible for achieving an increase in the number of people with a higher level of education. They train students, working professionals, individuals re-entering the labour market, people with a senior secondary vocational education and first-generation students.

### Employability

The UAS ensure optimal alignment with the labour market. They consult closely with the field of work on the range and content of programmes on offer. Placements, graduation assignments and practice-oriented research amongst companies and public institutions are a fixed part of programmes. (Guest) lecturers share their practical experience with students.

### Socially Relevant Innovation

The research results obtained by UAS lead to innovation in professional practice and are socially relevant. UAS do demand-driven research. Trade associations, professional organisations, public and private companies approach them with specific social issues. Research questions are formulated and researched with professionals.

### Regional Focus

UAS contribute to regional development. UAS are strongly anchored in the region and work closely with the business sector and public institutions in the region.

### Social Cohesion

UAS work towards the achievement of social cohesion. They focus on business and on society at large. They train new types of learner and ensure that innovation happens in small companies and big ones.

# First results

The network for UAS began as an informal grouping in late 2004. The national associations of UAS from eight European countries decided to strengthen their collaboration, based on a shared idea on the development of UAS in Europe. The participating countries are to date Ireland, Germany, Austria, The Netherlands, Switzerland, Finland, Estonia and Denmark. The participants in the network have worked on their ambitions together in two different ways.

The national associations (rectors' conferences) have clarified the shared specific characteristics of UAS in Europe by introducing a detailed benchmark.

The findings obtained from the benchmark highlight what the UAS are and what they want to achieve. This makes it easier to find natural partners, improves recognition of the UAS sector at a European level and facilitates argumentation for the investments necessary. The network wants to focus on partners from the world of work, education and policy with the same objectives, making it possible for parties to work together on the achievement of these objectives.

The network expects that a clear profile of professionally oriented higher education will have the following positive effects. Employers and students will improve their understanding of the value of the professionally oriented study programmes. This will have positive consequences for employability of students, and will widen the scope for cooperation with businesses, SMEs and the public sector in innovation and applied research projects in the regions. A clear profile also opens up new and better opportunities for institutions to cooperate and to find the most suited partners.

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## European 'BaLaMa' Benchmark

By far the most important and most extensive activity undertaken by the network to date is the Bachelor for the Labour Market (BaLaMa) project. The intention of the project focuses on the elaboration of the profile 'professionally oriented higher education'. The eight participating countries executed an in-depth inventory into the characteristics of professionally oriented higher education and the interaction with the world of work. Based on this broad survey a shared profile and a general set of descriptors were formulated which fit the European Qualification Framework.

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### The associations (rectors' conferences) support each other in their positioning at a national and European level.

The partners use the network to stay up-to-date on current national themes in the field of higher education and to compare policy agendas and collaboration with business in the various participant countries. This enables participants to place their own activities in a European context, to develop arguments for national positioning and to set up new initiatives in their own countries based on the example given by partner countries.

This broader European perspective on higher education yields advantages when advising UAS, in the event of collaboration with partners in the field and when consulting with policy makers from national authorities. Once participants in the network observe similarities in approach and requirements between countries, they can get together at a European level to disseminate their ideas.

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### Austrian Nomenclature

In Austria, good international contacts achieved through the network enabled the FHK to successfully argue for homonymous Bachelor and Master degrees for all higher education institutions. By using the German arrangement as a reference, the FHK managed to achieve an appropriate amendment of the UAS study act. This was an important achievement for the status of the Austrian UAS as equivalent higher education institutions to traditional universities and for the international acceptance of their graduates.

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# Future Goals

Today's participants have committed themselves to strengthening the European Network for UAS. They feel that the network improves profiling and positioning of UAS and their partners from the world of work at a European level. For example, the European Commission approached individuals to participate in a brainstorm on life long learning via the network. Based on this success, the network wants to broaden its activities. These activities will be closely aligned to demands from the business sector, SMEs, the public sector and policy-makers in Europe.

## 1 Introducing benchmarks on core items of professionally oriented higher education for better profiling

The network wants to choose a subject for an in-depth benchmark every two years, which it will implement in a period of one-and-a-half years. Benchmarks should contribute to profiling the UAS sector at a European level. Following the first successful benchmark, the network is working on a new one focussing on the link between higher education and applied research.

## 2 Intensifying networking and the exchange of best practices between participants for better positioning and learning

The network wants to offer its participants more possibilities to stay up-to-date on relevant themes and the alignment with the business sector in different European countries. This can yield arguments for their own positioning and may result in new initiatives based on examples in partner countries. The ambition is to put more effort into the exchange of information between participants and into the sharing of best practices in the field of higher education. The network plans to achieve this in a number of ways, for example by a study trip or by organising theme sessions with experts and guest speakers from the world of work, education and policy.

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### Study Visit by the Strategic Foundation Innovation Alliance

The network's conference in Berlin in March 2007 proved to be a good way to bring together relevant partners. For example, the Dutch Strategic Foundation Innovation Alliance which is active in the field of applied research and knowledge circulation expressed the wish to undertake an in-depth study visit to Switzerland, Germany and Austria in October 2007. The purpose of the visit is to learn from the position of applied research in partner universities abroad. Central themes during this study visit will be the relationship between applied research and education, structural cooperation with relations such as research institutes and industry, the way quality assurance has been put in place, methods for achieving internal and external financing and national policy.

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### 3 Offering a platform to promote new initiatives between individual UAS and between UAS and their partners from the world of work and policy

The associations (rectors' conferences) in the network want to offer an active platform in which UAS, companies and government can come together. This will be achieved in a number of ways, including the organisation of conferences, inviting partners to attend expert meetings and by approaching parties on specific issues. This will make it easier to create scope for new initiatives that UAS can undertake with each other and with partners from the business sector and government. Via the network, universities of applied science will also be able to guarantee their alignment with developments in the field of work, professional associations and policy.

Examples of initiatives that the network wants to promote between UAS and with partners from the world of work are joint Bachelor and Master Programmes, the exchange of students and lecturers from UAS, collaboration in the field of regional development and applied research, joint participation in European projects and the joint exploration of European subsidy options for the UAS sector.

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#### Berlin Conference

As part of the study into a shared profile for the UAS sector, the network organised an international conference in Berlin in March 2007. The conference was meant to discuss and test ideas on the profile of UAS in the European Higher Education Area, particularly linked to employability of graduates and to the cooperation between UAS and the world of work. An important goal was to bring together relevant parties from the UAS sector for peer-learning activities, and to discuss common objectives and mutual cooperation. The conference succeeded in its goals, as the 130 participants turned out to be enthusiastic to meet their partners and to discuss their shared agenda. They expressed the wish to continue meeting in this way.

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### 4 Working together to improve the quality of the sector

The activities mentioned above yield insights into views on organisation, regulations, quality assurance and financial support for UAS. This makes it possible to make specific recommendations for quality improvements. It also offers a basis for consultation with professional associations on the comparison, recognition and appraisal of programmes and applied research.

