

# QUESTIONS

## PART ONE

### General questions and Discussion

1. Are there significant changes in the situation of PhD candidates in your country as compared to last year? And in the situation of junior researchers? Please specify if your association considers those changes an improvement or a deterioration.

*There has been a 33% increase in the number of government grants through the fund for scientific research and the institute for science and technology.*

*This is a correction that was long overdue because more and more fields became eligible for such grants. Obviously this is an improvement.*

2. What main improvement would your association like to see in the situation of PhD candidates? And in the situation of post-docs and other junior researchers?

*We'd like more possibilities for financing, both for individuals and for projects, especially for non-directed research on the initiative of the researcher. ("fundamental" research)*

*For post-docs, long term prospects in the form of positions with some form of longer-term security between the PhD stage and the academic personnel stage.*

3. In general, what are the hottest topics (in Higher Education and Research & Development) under discussion in your country, in particular affecting young researchers? Specify at least two of these.

*The percentage of bursaries that is successful in applying, the ERC, women in science, braindrain/gain, and the evolution of the PhD with the Ba/Ma system.*

4. Which actions or activities has your national association been involved in this year? What are your association's future planned activities?

*We have (successfully) protested against the government tightening its grip on the funding agencies, have written a memorandum to the political parties for the elections of past june, and written a letter / put pressure on the minister of research about the appalling situation with the success rates for bursaries (which led to a 33% increase in funding).*

5. How does your national association define its area of activities? Following which procedure does your association get to establish its official positions (if any)?

*Focus Research is an interuniversity organisation of scientists with the goal to improve the position of science in Flanders and Belgium. Official positions are filled by an election procedure at the general assembly.*

6. Did your national association ever make a PhD survey or plans to make one? On which topics? Do you think these surveys would profit from data of other countries being included? How do you imagine Eurodoc contributing to that?

*We have never conducted a survey, but should do so. We would profit from the experiences of other national organisations to substantially facilitate the process. There was a newspaper (de Morgen) which recently conducted a large inquiry about research in Flanders, which yielded some useful data.*

7. Which are the ideas your association would like to put forward for EURODOC policy in 2005?

*We would like to promote the European research council heavily, and would like to see a model implemented such as in Canada, which takes scientific seniority into account instead of age when judging research proposals / curricula.*

### **Bologna Process and Lisbon Strategy**

8. How would the application of the "Bologna Process rules", like comparability of structures, ECTS systems, Diploma Supplement, affect the Doctoral Level in your country [<http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/>] ?

*It will supposedly limit the duration of a PhD to 3 years, but there is much uncertainty about the Bologna process and how it is going to be implemented.*

9. What is the position of your national association on the insertion of the Doctoral level as the 3rd cycle of the Bologna Process? What are your expectations or fears, if any, related to this?

*We hope that a harmonisation in duration of the PhD will take place due to the European grant systems. We also hope that in the process, the organisation of grants at the regional level isn't lost, as the present system on the European level raises a lot of eyebrows here. It also remains to be seen how the balance between fundamental and applied research is kept, and if there will be at a European level research projects at the level of the individual researcher.*

10. Is the Lisbon Strategy [[http://europa.eu.int/comm/lisbon\\_strategy/index\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/lisbon_strategy/index_en.html)] affecting the policy of your country as what regards the recruitment of young researchers?

*Our regional government has written the 3% norm in their declaration of objectives, so funding is increasing.*

## **Labour Conditions**

11. What are in your country the advantages and disadvantages of the PhD candidates' status (student/employee/mixed status/external)?

*There are a lot of systems here, but all have in common that the PhD student has full social security, including pension rights. Salaries are about equal, the only problem is when people do a PhD unpaid on an unemployment fee. This obviously pays less. Another hot issue is that its more and more common to split assistantships in 2 half time people instead of one full-time.*

*The difference between employed status and a bursary is that the bursary doesn't pay taxes, so tax-deductible things such as a loan cannot be tax-deducted.*

12. What status does your association prefer for PhD candidates and why?

*Ideally, we'd like to see PhD students as tax-free employees, because this is the cheapest way to create a large number of full-time positions.*

## **Supervision and Training**

13. Referring to the Eurodoc supervision and training Charter (to be found as Appendix 2 at :

<http://www.eurodoc.net/workgroups/supervision/Eurodocsuptrain.pdf>) :

is there any concern or action in your country at present to implement standards that would accommodate the standards outlined here? If this is not the case do you see a need to implement a charter of your own or another suitable document?

*There certainly are concerns that are highlighted in the charter that are not presently implemented here. Evaluation of the supervision is one aspect, as is training during a PhD. We think the charter is very suitable as a working text.*

14. How are doctoral examinations conducted in your country (number of examiners and other people involved, length and format of examination, any specific guidelines on criteria you are given on how PhDs are passed/failed...)? Do examinations vary in style or length in different subject areas or institutions? Are your theses an official publication?

*There is some flexibility in how jury's are composed and in length of the examination ...normally five to seven people in a jury, of which at least some external to the institution. Examinations are composed of a presentation of about 40 minutes, and up to two hours of questioning. Some institutions have a pre-defense, which is the real examination, after which the public defense is more a pro-forma matter. Theses are published in le moniteur belge, but don't have an ISBN number.*

15. What are the different routes you have to a doctoral qualification (for example this may be full time research, part of a teaching fellowship or be a

longer doctorate with taught elements)? Also give details of any doctorates ("professional doctorates" or "taught doctorates") other than the research doctorate (PhD), such as EngD -doctor of engineering- or PsychD -doctor of psychology- : specify their length, entry requirements and any difference in level they may have.

*Only a full-time research doctorate exists here. Entry requirements : Master's degree or equivalent, to be decided on an individual basis.*

16. Are you aware of any means by which standards on research degrees in your country are monitored? For example, is there an outside agency that will audit institutions on their performance, or are there forums to evaluate performance? Please give any details you have on the above that will measure quality assurance in your institution.

*There is no quality control at the level of the PhD.*

### **International mobility**

17. Which are the main opportunities (institutional agreements and exchange programmes) for the mobility of researchers offered in your country? Which of them are the most popular?

*Grants by the government organisations FWO and IWT, bilateral projects with developing countries, and Marie Curie fellowships.*

*No idea which are more popular.*

18. What is the awareness of young researchers about the possibilities of the various exchange programmes? How could this be improved?

*It's quite bad. A good website could help here.*

19. Which grants and scholarships are offered to enhance mobility of national researchers to go abroad? (list in order of their popularity)

*see 17.*

20. Which grants and scholarships are offered to enhance mobility of foreign researchers to come to your country? (list in order of their popularity)  
Can foreign students and/or students from EU member states get a grant for PhD programmes in your country?

*The grant and scholarship situation for non-EU researchers is very complicated. Scholarships exists, but are mainly on a per-country basis as part of larger research or exchange programs.*

*Discrimination against members of other EU member states is illegal, so yes, they can apply for a PhD grant.*

21. Do you have any examples of institutionalized “joint degree programmes” for European or international PhDs? (if any, indicate number of programmes, their locations and concerned academic disciplines as well as number of participants and their origin/destination country) What are the requirements to get this label (whatever it is called)?

*No.*

### **Professional Future**

22. Are you aware that the European Commission is about to release a European Researchers’ Charter and a Code of Conduct for the recruitment of researchers? Does your association have any opinion on these documents?

*Yes, we support them.*

23. Which way can these European recommendations be better promoted and implemented at the national and institutional level?

*This should be a political, top-down initiative.*

24. Does your association have any opinion on intriguing issues like the duration of contracts, the assessment of the scientific production, the different career paths and their comparability in academia and industry (or other)?

*Yes. Contracts should offer more security (longer term contracts with more clear evaluation criteria), the assesment of scientific production should be through peer review, with only limited stress on “quality indicators”. Comparability between industry and academia should be implemented of course.*

### **Gender Equality**

25. Are there any initiatives in your country that you estimate to have been at least partially successful in reducing gender imbalances existing at the PhD level or at later academic stages? If yes, please give details. If not, please identify the probable reasons for this and indicate what the most important steps would be towards a programme that really has a practical impact.

*We’re working on an initiative as in Canada where “delays in research activity” can be used on a curriculum.*

26. Are there notable differences in the gender distribution between

comparable positions in academia and other sectors? What are the reasons for this? What is the tendency?

*In the lower levels the proportions are nearly equal by now, the problem is higher up, but the expectation is that the situation will be normalised in the future*

## **PART TWO : FIGURES**

*Please try and provide these data, if available in your country (if not, please say so). All data may not be available for each year, provide the last ones (with references). Sources expected are institutions that monitor higher education and publish stats (specify their names, websites, and weblinks to published documents). In case statistics aren't available, you might provide estimates (if available) with any appropriate sources (such as newspaper articles or magazine features). Whenever asked for a number/proportion of phd candidates, please specify the ratio per gender (male/female) or discipline, if known.*

1. How many institutions in your country offer PhD degrees? Specify the different types of institutions with PhD awarding powers (research only institutions / universities / colleges / other), and their ratio.

*There are 6 universities in Flanders*

2. What is an approximate total number of PhD candidates in your country? What has been the trend in the past five years?

*For Flanders :  
See attached excel sheet.*

3. What is the average age of students entering doctoral programmes in your country? What is/are the entry qualifications for getting into a PhD programme (Bachelor's/Honours /Master's degree)?

*Masters degree, average age is 23 years.*

4. How many candidates defended their PhD last year? What has been the trend in the past five years? What is the average age of the PhD candidates at the time of completion of their doctorate?

*27 to 28 years, see attached excel sheet*

5. What is the nominal length of PhD programmes? What is the average time from start to finish? What is the average active time spent to complete the PhD programme? Are there official part-time modes for PhD programmes?

*4y.*

*4 to 5y.*

*4 to 5y.*

yes.

6. What is the percentage of PhD candidates who complete their PhD? Among those, what is the proportion of those who complete it within the allotted time period?

*60%, but that is a rough guess.*

7. What is the percentage of PhD candidates who withdraw? Are there interim qualifications for those who do not complete their doctorates (Mphil degree or other)?

*No interim qualifications, percentage is heavily dependent on field of study. 40% in science up to 80% in e.g. literature.*

8. Are PhD candidates registered as such in any place (e.g. at a university or a ministry)?

*At university, yes.*

9. Are PhD candidates considered students? Do they have to pay fees? How much is it? Does this apply equally to foreigners (EU/ non-EU)?

*Yes and yes. The fee is 25 EUR/year for an enrollment, in the first year and the year of the defense it's higher; 125 EUR. Also applicable to foreigners.*

10. What is the proportion of PhD candidates who get funding for their research activity? Specify the different types of fundings and their ratio.

*Most are paid, although some only half-time.*

*Main part are assistants/projects (45%), the other half are FWO/IWT grants (22/22%) and the rest is unpaid (5-10 %) rough guess !*

11. What is the average stipend/salary or bursary of the PhD candidates with funding (please give references for comparison : national minimum salary, average salary, salary of people with the same skills)?

*Salary is around 1500 EUR bruto (=netto, tax free). Minimum wage (social security) is 613 EUR net if you're living by yourself. Minimum wage for a full-time job is 960 EUR net.*

*Average salary will be around that figure for people with the same skills.*

12. What is the proportion of PhD candidates having workers rights and duties? Specify the rights and duties provided to these PhD candidates (social, unemployment benefit, taxes etc.).

*All.*

13. What is the proportion of PhD candidates that practice teaching during their PhD programme? Are they paid separately for their teaching duties?

*80% (not the contractants), no.*

14. What is the amount of time spent on this activity?

*For assistants up to 50% of their time, for grantholders max. 4hrs per week.*

15. What proportion of PhD candidates are involved in a collaboration between academia and industry during their PhD?

*20% (rough guess)*

16. What are the numbers of incoming and outgoing PhD candidates in your country every year? What are the numbers of incoming and outgoing junior researchers (postdoctoral level)?

*See excel table for PhD's. Postdocs, no data available.*

17. What is the proportion of PhD candidates who remain working in academia after they defended their PhD?

*No data.*

18. What proportion of young researchers go to R&D departments in companies? How many of them are involved in programs provided by the government to support the employment of young researchers in the private sector (if any)?

*No data, and no such programs.*

19. What is the average salary of young doctors in academic and private sector?

*Comparable to what you earn at the end of a PhD (approx. 1700 EUR)*

20. How many members (local organisation or individual) does your national organisation have? Specify if they are local organisations (how many of them) or individuals (how many of them). At how many of the PhD awarding institutions do you have members?

*We do not keep member lists, but at least 4 out of 6 universities are always represented at meetings, and over 100 people in Flanders have expressed their interest to keep posted*

*about our activities. We prefer to work with concrete initiatives, and mouth-to-mouth promotion of them.*