

EURODOC 2005 QUESTIONNAIRE – GREECE

Part One

General questions and Discussion

1. A first important change in the situation of PhD candidates and junior researchers was the initiatives taken by Hel.As.D.R to establish a national network of communication among its members. In this year and for the first time associations and individuals for all around Greece start to communicate, exchanging ideas and experiences. The 4th Conference of Eurodoc, the publication of our newsletter, the forum and mailing lists that we are about to create are some of the actions toward this goal. A second important change in the situation of PhD candidates and postdoctoral researchers was the activation of scholarships named “Irakleitos” and “Pithagoras”, after they were announced at 2002. They are part of a program financed by the E.U and the ministry of Education. These scholarships referred to an important number of students (about 1500 researchers). This action is considered as an improvement by our association, which made an effort to speed up the procedure, since it was the first time in Greece that an important amount of funds were given to a large number of PhD students and junior researchers, to be focused only in their research.

2. The main improvement that our association like to see in the following years in the situation of PhD candidates is the promotion of their thoughts and opinions concerning academic and administrative issues of Greek higher education. They must be established as equal members of the academic community, who will play an important role in the amelioration of the research quality in Greece.

3. The hottest topic under discussion in Greece is whether or not we can privatize higher education and more specifically if the students that graduate from private colleges (that are mainly branches of foreign universities) and Greek public universities have the same academic and professional rights. This discussion affects PhD candidates only if these private colleges will create in the future PhD programs.

4. In this year Hel.As.D.R has been involved in the following actions and activities:

- Organization of the 4th European Conference of Doctoral Researchers.

- Update of the website, and translation in English.
- Publication of the newsletter (N.E.A).
- Questionnaire concerning the situation of doctoral research in Greece.
- Establishment of a network among local associations and individuals.
- Participation in conferences such as “The Europe of Knowledge”, 2004 and “The Doctoral Programmes for the European Knowledge Society”, 2005.

Our future plans activities are:

- Organization of seminars, if possible in all the Greek Universities, concerning the perspectives of the doctoral research funding in Greece.
- Expansion of our national network which will include all regional associations of PhD candidates, where there exist.
- Publication in the press of the questionnaire followed by our suggestions for the amelioration of the doctoral research conditions in Greece.

5. Hel.As.D.R works in a first part in the field of ameliorating the difficult situation that many doctoral students face. The lack of scholarships or reimbursement for their work in the university, the lack of space and infrastructure facilities is some of the issues that we are working on. A second field is the creation and expansion of an academic network for exchanging ideas and experiences in the issues concerning our research. Our official positions are established mainly by our newsletter (which is delivered in the ministry of Education and in all Universities), the announcement made in our website and by publications in the national press.

6. Until today Hel.As.D.R hasn't made a PhD survey. We are planning to do so, and we expect that the students participating to the mailing lists will be the initial source for ideas, experiences and suggestions.

7. Hel.As.D.R will expect from the Eurodoc to intercede to the European Commission in order to establish a unified European legislation concerning the conditions and terms of the doctoral research in all the European countries. This initiative will set up some obligatory minimum conditions, guiding and helping the national associations to promote their proposals for the amelioration of doctoral studies.

Bologna Process and Lisbon Strategy

8. According to the National Report of Greece 2005, the “Bologna Process rule” will directly affect the third cycle studies by the introduction of structural advanced studies at the doctoral level, thus introducing the concept of the “doctoral studies”. Indirectly, the acceptance of a national quality assurance system, the recognition of the degrees given by the branches of the foreign universities in Greece and the ECTS system will also affect the doctoral level.

9. In Greece the doctoral level is already considered the 3rd cycle studies.

10. The Lisbon strategy yet doesn't affect the policy of Greece as what regards the recruitment of young researchers.

Labour Conditions

11. In Greece the conditions of doctoral research are imposed by internal regulations created by each university or department. In general, PhD candidates don't pay fees but in revenge the opportunities of funding are very low. Some PhD candidates are financed by the university, for the administrative work they provide or when they participate in a research project, however without any public insurance. But this is not the general case. Even more, grants and scholarships are not enough for all. This economic insecurity drives many PhD candidates to find a job, which in his terms provoke them to fulfil their studies. The infrastructure facilities vary from one establishment to another, but again the lack of space remains an important problem in many universities, especially in Athens and Thessalonique. The main disadvantage of this status is that it doesn't exist a unified approach toward the doctoral studies. This causes an inequality of chances among PhD candidates and a difficulty to plan and propose a specific national policy for the doctoral studies.

12. Hel.As.D.R would prefer the establishment of a new legislation concerning the doctoral studies. PhD candidates cannot be thought as students with same extra features that are imposed by the department regulations, usually created without the participation of them. We expect a modern legislation which will establish doctoral researchers as equal members of an academic community, who will be reimbursed and insured for every service they provide. This new status will help, not only PhD candidates to work in much more better conditions, but also will

ameliorate the quality and the quantity of the research in Greece and generally in Europe.

Supervision and training

13. In Greece every PhD candidate is supervised by 3 academics from the university, one of whom becomes the students' primary supervisor (N 2083/92, article 13). This panel evaluates the student's progress and submits an annual report to the university. Until today only the personal relationship between the doctoral student and the primary supervisor guarantees a fruitful cooperation. In many departments standards outlined in the Eurodoc supervision and training chapter are implemented (for example the review methods or the complementary training). But again the lack of a unified legislation makes these issues a personal affair between the PhD candidate, the supervisor and the department.

14. At the end of the research a 7-member committee of academics, usually including the 3 supervising academics, confirms that the project is original and makes a significant contribution to the science. The student then defends his or her thesis orally before the 7-member committee. The defence is open to all members of the academic community (N 2083/92). The thesis is an official publication (however without an ISBN) that anyone can cross borrowed it by the library of the university that it is submitted.

15. In Greece, and in several departments, PhD candidates can conduct either a full time research or a part time. There is no big difference among these two cases, except from some extra duties to the department.

16. Until now it doesn't exist an outside agency that audit institutions on their performance. However, according to the Greek report 2005 for the Bologna process, a national quality assurance system will be created by the ministry of Education.

International mobility

17. Greece, along with Luxembourg and Ireland are the three countries with the highest percentage of outgoing students for studies abroad, a considerable portion of which applies for PhD studies. However, institutional agreements and exchange programmes for researchers don't exist. Only individual mobility

arrangements, which are part of an international research program in which the PhD candidate participates, exist.

18. The awareness of young researchers for exchange programmes is very low, but on the other hand an organized national or institutional policy on this issue doesn't exist.

19. State Institute for Scholarships (IKY) or private foundations (for example the Onassis Foundation) offer grants and scholarships to national researchers that go abroad.

20. Grants and scholarships that are offered in Greece don't enhance mobility for foreign researchers. Every PhD candidate, studying in Greece (Greek or foreigner), can apply for a grant or a scholarship.

21. Institutionalized "joint degree programmes" for European or international PhDs don't exist.

Professional Future

22. The European Researchers' Charter contains a number of declarations and points that, according to the opinion of Hel.As.D.R, are in the appropriate path. The most important and prominent part of the European Researchers' Charter concerning the early-stage researchers (including the PhD candidates) is the point that they should no longer be recognised as students, and that the persistent use of this description for reasons of administrative convenience acts as a deterrent, driving young people to other professions, where their level of qualification leads to earlier professional recognition (internal 'brain-drain'). It is therefore recommended that this practice should be phased out and that early-stage researchers should be treated as young professionals. It should be ensured, within the framework of national legislation that provision is made for early stage researchers to enjoy access for funding their doctoral training with adequate and equitable social security arrangements appropriate to the nature of the work they perform, their age, family situation, state of health without any discrimination of gender and supportive of family life. However, the voluntary basis of this declaration will make it inoperative. Therefore, Hel.As.D.R believes that the Eurodoc must intercede in order to make it obligatory for all the European countries.

23. If these recommendations stay in a voluntary basis, then it will be very difficult to promote them at a national or an institutional level. We believe that

obligatory basis together with an international coordination, managed by the Eurodoc, will lead to the desired results.

24. All these issues are of great interest in our association. Unfortunately, there is no direct linkage between academia and industry in Greece. Firms in Greece simply do not seem to value any scientific production. The professional future of a PhD holder in business is limited in Greece. Lack of work modernization, high unemployment rates, low wages and limited opportunities for research and consulting contribute to the advancement of following an academic career for many PhD holders. Thus, most PhD holders turn to an academic career.

Gender Equality

25. Almost 60% of those that follow PhD studies in Greece are men. Furthermore if we consider the respective changes in the total number of PhD students in Greece we can realize that the significant rising trends do not affect at all the sex distribution of those people concerned. Thus, the conclusion is that there have been no initiatives to reduce gender imbalances existing at the PhD level. There does not seem to be any particular reason except for a simple lack of a corresponding policy to reduce gender imbalances. This problem could be solved by providing some initials like for example special benefits in case of pregnancy and so on.

26. The above trend seems to also hold in other sectors also like people with a university degree and the total employment. The tendency does not seem to change over time. Perhaps the main reasons lie on the sphere of traditional and social factors that do not change so easily.

Part two: Figures

1. There are 20 Universities in Greece with several faculties each. All Universities are entitled of providing a PhD.

2. There are approx. 12500 PhD candidates in Greece and there has been an ascending trend in the past five years.

3. Concerning the average age, the data we have lead us to the conclusion that more than one to three doctoral students are more than 35 years old. However, note that most of the older PhD candidates are only enrolled as so but they do not

work on the PhDs. According to the entry qualifications the Ministry of Education stipulates that Admission of a student to PhD studies should depend on:

- the grade of the student's first degree
- the grade obtained on courses relevant to the research they want to conduct
- the formal grade as well as an evaluation by the admissions committee, of their Master's dissertation
- their existing experience in research
- in addition, it is necessary for any PhD student to have adequate knowledge of at least one foreign language

However, note that entry qualifications may vary according to each University and Faculty. For instance some Faculties require a GMAT score but others do not. However, there are some main entry qualifications which are the following

4. No data available
5. Under the 1992 law, as amended in 1999, the minimum length of study for a PhD is set at 3 years, full-time. This conforms to the "European system". However, the actual length of time seems to vary considerably, depending on the academic department. For example, in technical and applied sciences it is usual to complete PhD studies in approximately 3 years, while in other departments, especially in social sciences and arts, 4, 5, or even 6 years are the average time for doctoral studies. In addition, there are two kinds of doctoral programme available. The traditional mode consists of a 3-year, pure research period, with no taught element. Lately, some 4- or 5-year courses have been created, which incorporate the Master's within the PhD degree. These courses include lectures and seminars over the first 3 years, with research beginning during the second year of studies. This new approach falls within the so-called "American system".
6. No data available
7. Actually nobody withdraws from a PhD in Greece except for a decision of the professors. Someone can be a lifetime PhD student and s/he can abandon his/her research without however withdrawing from the University records.
8. They are registered as such in the faculties of the Universities
9. PhD candidates are considered as students in Greece. There is no legal regulation concerning fees. The majority of PhD courses in Greece do not have fees. However, there are certain departments that impose fees for PhD studies, as they do

for their master's programmes. There are also some programmes that provide financing for their PhD students, as if they were employed on a full-time basis. However, both those categories are very scarce and form merely the exemption that confirms the rule. The vast majority of PhD students neither have fees, nor get paid in order to pursue their research.

10. Funding opportunities are extremely limited. Thus, it is really difficult for people with low family income to pursue an academic or doctoral research career. They have to finance themselves during the completion of their PhD project. In that framework limited spectrum of funding options are evident. Firstly a minority of doctoral students can apply for a scholarship. Mainly, the scholarships for Postgraduate studies are provided by the State Institute for Scholarships (IKY), after national competitions per annum. Currently there are only 225 scholarships in total, to compete for, for all the Postgraduate students (at Master's or PhD level), of all disciplines. Other public and private institutions can also provide some scholarships (no more than 60 each year), usually depending on the student's overall performance, his/her region of origin, family / marital status, financial condition of the family and other particular terms. As such funding opportunities are extremely rare in the Greece. Furthermore it speaks volumes the fact that the vast majority of business organizations do not support financially PhD research projects in association with university authorities.

11. The stipend of a PhD candidate with funding is very limited: 470 Euros per month. So, even those that have succeeded on the competition of IKY, they need to work extra hours or to find a job, in order to achieve a decent life. In that framework, PhD students in Greece face serious economic problems. It should be mentioned that in Greece no income guarantee either in the form of receiving a minimum wage or other allowances are provided by the State. As such it is not surprising at all that many students during the completion of their studies are in parallel job seekers and heavily dependent economically onto their family.

12. Instead of fees some academic departments have imposed a regulation regarding a certain amount of working hours per week that each PhD student must devote to a variety of department's academic activities, such as tutorials, several administrative tasks, exams supervision and grading, paper presentation and co-ordination in various seminars along with the respective faculty. This amount of hours usually varies between 10-20 hours per week. For example, in Athens

University of Economics and Business PhD candidates are supposed to provide 12-20 hours of work per week.

13. As already mentioned, teaching can be a way of working hours as a compulsory academic activity. However, indeed candidates usually practice teaching and get paid during their research.

14. It depends on the student himself and the professor. Usually the teaching hours are more as the candidate reaches his/her research end, simply because he/she has obtained more experience in the entire academic field than in the first semesters.

15. As already mentioned, there is actually very little linkage between academia and industry. Any effort lies on the ground of the PhD candidate himself.

16. There is no available data on the number of PhD students leaving Greece to study abroad, or the foreign PhD students coming to Greece. The general impression is that due to the language and to the limited available job and funding opportunities, it is a rare phenomenon for foreign students to come to Greece to do all or part of their PhD. Less scarce but still very rare is the practice of a temporary stay abroad during their PhD for Greek PhD students normally studying in Greece. We believe, however, that the percentage of Greek PhD students studying abroad is a lot higher. From the other side many Greek students study abroad for undergraduate or postgraduate studies a considerable portion of which applies for PhD studies.

17. In general terms, the majority of students who take a Ph.D. programme in Greece wish to work in academia. Ph.D is considered to be closely related to an academic career, rather than a professional one. Furthermore,

18. Very few because of the above mentioned reasons

19. The annual income in Greek academia is quite high in comparison to the rewards offered in industry and other fields of economic activity. It should be mentioned that wage levels in Greece are one of the lowest across the EU area and working conditions are deteriorating over the years as EIRO and other relevant studies have shown.

20. Our national organisation has currently 163 members. This can be considered as a great progress as the organisation is only one and a half years old. We are aiming in expanding our activities mainly by founding local organisations.