

Eurodoc 2005 Questionnaire – The Netherlands

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 are two significant changes compared to last year. First, the national union of universities (VSNU) put forward a paper that expresses the ambition to (re)start hiring PhD candidates as students (no employment benefits) instead of employers (as is common now). We are campaigning against this ambition. Second, several faculties have opened the option to start working on your PhD when you are only halfway your Master (It is common to start PhD only after obtaining Master). This offers a cost reduction for the Universities, but will have negative impact on the quality and time spent on PhD projects. The Union of Universities endorses this option, we are against it.

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?

See question 1. Another problem for young researchers is the fact that senior research positions are scarce and often temporary. Many PhD's therefore choose a job that lies outside academia. However, the gap between science and business is still too large. It is important to start up more initiatives to train the PhD's professional skills and to clarify the serious role they can play in business or industry. We would like to see that funding for PhD projects and for early stage researchers is made available in an institute-independent manner. An early stage researcher should be able to apply for funding without a predetermined place where the work should be done, and without formal support of a senior scientist. When a proposal is granted, funding is personal, not institutional. The early stage researcher then has to find a place to do the research. In this way competition between institutes is stimulated, improving labor conditions. It provides opportunity to do research outside the established lines of research, and makes early stage researches more independent.

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.

There are some plans about the re-introduction of the PhD studentship, which would make PhD-candidates students again instead of employees (see question 1). Another hot topic is the question whether the first year of a PhD study should be integrated into the final year of a masters-thesis study (see question 1).

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

Last year, we organized a discussion session with PhD students on their career prospects. In the next year we are planning a national survey and conference on this subject. For next year, we are also planning a career event specifically aimed at PhD students, in cooperation with the magazine 'intermediar'.

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)?

The Dutch PhD network defends the interests of PhD candidates on a national level. This includes responding on governmental legislation, providing information to politicians and informing the media. Our association does not hold any official positions.

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?

The PNN is currently applying for funding to do a PhD survey. This survey focuses on the future prospects of PhD candidates, job satisfaction and quality of supervision. Making a comparison to other countries could be profitable, provided that the range of questions is comparable. Eurodoc could provide a survey-template for future surveys, and make available all data acquired with such a survey. However, this seems to be an extremely difficult task from a methodological point of view and it is questionable whether the same questions are equally interesting in all European countries.

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

Some questions for Eurodoc could be: Should there be a European standard for PhD studies? Should PhD candidates be considered employees or students? Should a PhD study also include non-scientific education, providing knowledge and experience for a career outside science? PNN wants to put forward that we want to have more insight in Eurodoc policies and activities. By this, we specifically mean which activities take place (for example: are there any meetings with important European policy makers?), which views were expressed there (for example: which views on which subjects did the Eurodoc board express during these meetings?) and what has been the result of this? PNN thinks it is necessary the Eurodoc Board writes an extra mid-term report on these issues.

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 ?

The Bologna Process rules would affect the Doctoral level in The Netherlands considerably. First of all, PhD candidates are employees and not students, so if ECTS systems would have to be introduced, the employee status would be REDUCED to a student status and that is not acceptable. Second of all, the period for a PhD in The Netherlands is four years, whilst in many other European countries, this is three years and this would lead to a reduction of the PhD period. PNN is not necessarily against this unless projects become better defined, more reachable and better supervised. The comparability of structures and Diploma Supplement would not form many problems under the condition that the quality of the PhD is not compromised, since policy directions already take a European approach.

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?

In The Netherlands, it is proposed that the PhD starts already in the Masters. PNN has taken a strong position against this development (see question 1). First of all, salaries of PhD candidates are reduced with one year. PhD candidates actually have to pay for it themselves during this first year. This makes doing a PhD less attractive. Second of all, it would not solve the problem of the low percentage of efficiency in completing PhDs in The Netherlands (30% in five years).

10. Is the Lisbon Strategy affecting the policy of your country as what regards the recruitment of young researchers?

The Dutch politicians, business and scientists worry about the low innovation level in Europe and in our own country. Each year, a workshop is organized on the topic of 'science and society', in which an emphasis is placed on the potential of young researchers and the low percentage of them. Also, an 'Innovation Platform' has been established, in which high politicians (such as the prime Minister, a well-known Harry Potter-look-alike), business and universities take place. This platform proposed to stimulate a better career development of young researchers within universities.

Labor Conditions

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

Most PhD candidates in the Netherlands have an employee status. This means that their scientific and educational efforts are seen as 'work', which is rewarded with a salary. They perform scientific research (about 85 % of their time) and, in most cases, have teaching duties (about 15 % of their time). Their primary and secondary working conditions are laid down in a Collective Working Agreement (CWA) and are in accordance with the fact that most PhDs in the Netherlands produce several publications and write a high quality doctoral thesis within the four years that an average PhD (officially) takes. Considering this CWA, it is strictly illegal for universities to appoint their PhDs without fulfilling the conditions in this agreement. Some universities, however, appoint their PhD candidates as students, putting the emphasis on the education that the PhD candidate receives. The student-PhD does receive a reasonable monthly fee for his work, but differs from the employee-PhD in the way that he / she is said to have more freedom concerning research-content, no teaching responsibilities and no obliged daily attendance. Although such a student-PhD seems attractive, there are some considerable drawbacks, the most important being the lack of social security and, as a consequence, a smaller net income than employee-PhD's. Student-PhDs do not receive bonuses for holidays, must pay for their own health and social insurances and do not build up retirement-funding. In addition, a student-PhD does not receive any social allowance in case of disease or later incapacity for work. Moreover, it is impossible to receive any mortgage or loan on the basis of your work as a student, making it impossible for young student-PhDs to build a stable home situation. A third group of PhDs is employed outside the university (i.e. external) and often only have a personal relationship with their supervisor. Most PhDs in this group choose to spend a major amount of their leisure time to do a PhD, as a personal interest.

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

PNN prefers the employee status for young academic professionals who recently obtained their Master degree. For more senior professionals, doing an external PhD in their leisure time can be very interesting, however, the difference between the two being that the latter already has a working position elsewhere. The fact that some universities appoint their PhDs as students is unacceptable according to PNN. Not only is a PhD-student-appointment in conflict with the Collective Working Agreement, it also depends on a purely artificial difference between the duties of student-PhDs and employee-PhDs, since large freedom in scientific content and attendance are also very common for employee-PhDs. In our view, the reintroduction of student-PhDs in the Netherlands is purely a consequence of cutting scientific staff salaries, and can not be tolerated as such.

Supervision and Training

13. Referring to the Eurodoc supervision and training Charter: 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?

The actions mentioned are somehow implemented in ESR training.

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?

Doctoral examinations are done during a strict academic ceremony where the examiners (professors that are able to referee the thesis), most of the time the committee consists out of 5 members plus the ESR supervisor(-s). This ceremony takes one hour and is strictly a ceremony, when it takes place the thesis is already accepted. The more important fase is when the thesis goes to the reading committee (same as the committee from ceremony or slightly different). This committee can still ask for changes.

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.*

Most common is a position in which an employee-PhD conduct research for 85% of the time and teach for another 15%. There are some exceptions to this, when employees teach much more and conduct research for a longer period than the common four years. Another group is employed outside university and conducts research in their free time. The requirements to get the doctorate are the same for all these different positions.

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 standard monitoring on research degrees. This is done separate for universities and institutions.

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?*

The Marie Curie grant is popular and relatively well know. Several exchange programs are directly related to specific research areas and not open to the general community.

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

Awareness and availability of exchange programs differs between institutions.

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

As far as we are aware, there are no national exchange programs. International mobility is accommodated at lower organizational levels.

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?*

Students from other countries cannot apply for a PhD grant based on their own research proposal without the intervention of an established Dutch scientist. (the same holds for Dutch students).

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)?*

We are unaware of "joint degree programmes" as mentioned in the Netherlands.

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?*

PNN did not consider incorporating the European Researchers Charter and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers in its policy and lobby activities. When they appear we will certainly see if we can use them as a basis for new campaigns or press notifications. We believe that such policy papers do reach policy makers, but not individual scientists. This limits the themes that can be successfully treated within such documents. PNN supports the objectives of the Charter to promote a framework for the career management and employment prospects of researchers; to ensure that researchers are treated as an integral part of the institutions in which they work, and therefore that researchers employed on short-term contracts are not disadvantaged in their career development; and promote equality between contract researchers and long-term staff. Already, similar initiatives are taken within The Netherlands, such as the 'tenure track' which aims to improve the career development of researchers and make an academic career more attractive for young researchers. The Charter could enhance the discussion in The Netherlands on these topics among policy makers.

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

Dutch universities, faculties and research groups are highly autonomous. Higher strata of organization will generally not give guidelines regarding policy to lower strata, except for financial arrangements (for instance, the government does not set the targets for Universities, Universities set their own individual targets, the government merely approves of these targets or not). Lower strata are too far off from European politics to take notice from European papers. This limits the impact European policy has on the work floor. European recommendations aimed at the national level have a better chance of success than recommendations aimed at the institutional level. Recommendations have a better chance to be implemented when they are specific about which group is responsible for the implementation, and which group is responsible for evaluating the success of the implementation.

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)?

On the duration of contracts: Contracts for PhD-employees commonly last 4 years. This duration is standard in government-funded projects. The average duration of a PhD project is slightly over 5 years. So, contracts for PhD candidates are too short. We believe however, considering that Dutch PhD projects are already long compared to international standards that the solution should lay in decreasing the duration of PhD projects through improved supervision and training and lowering inflated standards. Contracts for postdocs commonly last 2-4 years. We believe this period is too short, giving rise to problems with job and livelihood security, a high bureaucratic load in applying for new funding and incompatibility of science with family life due to high mobility requirements. Moreover, we deem this period too short to develop interesting research lines. It makes an unappealing future perspective for PhD candidates. If postdoc contract period would be lengthened to the duration of (or longer than) PhD projects (4 to 5 years), postdocs could take a valuable role in supervising and training PhD candidates, making their postdoc experience more diverse and solving an important problem in PhD candidate training.

On the assessment of scientific production: Only about one third of PhD students is able to find a follow up job in academia after their graduation. In the postdoc system that follows, many more must leave academia simply because the available positions are scarce compared to the demand. The consequence of this is that the jobs available must be distributed over candidates that are all excellent, hard working, and meeting standards. Because of this, finding a job is too much dependent on chance, instead of production. In this sense, the role of scientific production in determining career prospects within academia is lacking. Scientific output of research groups (not individual researchers) is monitored by the Dutch Union of Universities (VSNU). In a recent policy paper, the VSNU expresses the ambition to include the quality of PhD training into the quality assessment of research groups. The government endorses this idea and we (PNN) have responded with enthusiasm, hoping that this will increase the quality of the training.

On compatibility of academia and industry: Investments of industry into R&D are low in the Netherlands, compared to other European countries, so this can be improved. Recently, PNN started an initiative with a large publisher (VNU) to improve the link between PhD candidates and the job market outside academia. This initiative consists of two components. First, we will publish and distribute a guide in which companies interested in hiring graduated PhDs can advertise, so that PhD candidates can get a clearer picture of the job market available to them. Our guide will also include articles with career advice, portraits of successful people, etc. to provide an interesting browse. Second, we will organize a career event for PhD candidates. On this event, which will be like a job market, there will be an entertainment program with workshops, trainings and debate, but also stands of companies interested in hiring PhDs. The recruitment agency Young Executive Recruitment (YER) performs a role in linking PhD candidates with suitable companies. This will be the first job-market event in the Netherlands to be targeted specifically at PhD candidates.

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.

Several programs are established to stimulate the promotion of female researchers, such as Aspasia, Meervoud, Herintredersprogramma, FOM/v. These programs are too small to reduce the huge gender imbalance in Dutch science.

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?

Figures from the EU show that The Netherlands has the lowest rate of women with a doctorate degree (31%). The Netherlands has as little female professors as African countries like Botswana and the like.

Part Two: figures

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.

Fourteen universities offer PhD degrees. Most recent numbers of incoming PhD candidates, without the Open University (from: VSNU: KUOZ)

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Leiden	173	150	152	182	169
Utrecht	188	207	333	280	270
Groningen	116	157	172	209	176
Rotterdam	70	93	121	113	97
Maastricht	71	81	78	71	80
Amsterdam UvA	172	243	unknown	unknown	unknown
Amsterdam VU	85	161	150	167	173
Nijmegen	98	88	124	151	138
Tilburg	53	34	32	41	50

Delft (technics)	142	165	214	196	194
Eindhoven (technics)	99	111	128	150	142
Enschede (technics)	70	94	125	109	145
Wageningen (agriculture)	107	95	102	122	118
Dutch Science Foundation	370	385	92	5	0
Total	1814	2064	1823	1796	1752

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

There are probably between 8000 and 10000 PhD candidates in the Netherlands. There is not a clear trend. See question 1 for the trend in incoming PhD candidates in the last five years.

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)?

The age of incoming PhD candidates is unknown, this is not registered at a national level. The entry qualification is a Master.

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?

Unknown. There are no recent figures. We estimate that about 1300 PhD candidates defend their thesis each year. Table: 1216 PhD candidates who started in 1989 defended their thesis before 2002. 1299 candidates, who started in 1990, defended their thesis before 2002 (from: VSNU: KUOZ).

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Defended before 2002	1216	1299	1372	1345	1204

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?

The thesis should be defended within four years, but often it takes PhD candidates much longer. It is most common that it takes between five and six years. There are no part-time programmes. In the table the most recent figures of how many years it takes PhD candidates to defend their thesis in several disciplines. (from: VSNU: KUOZ)

	x < 5	5 < x < 6	6 < x < 7	x > 7
Agriculture	38%	34%	16%	12%
Nature	64%	24%	8%	4%
Technics	72%	20%	5%	3%
Health	54%	30%	9%	7%

Economics	69%	15%	9%	7%
Law	28%	30%	22%	20%
Social Science	38%	33%	17%	12%
Humanities	36%	31%	17%	16%
Total	57%	26%	10%	7%

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?*

In the table: the percentage of PhD candidates who started their PhD in a certain year, and defended their dissertation before 2002. This shows that about 75% of the incoming PhD candidates complete their thesis (from: VSNU: KUOZ).

1986	82%
1987	77%
1988	76%
1989	74%
1990	74%
1991	72%
1992	66%
1993	61%
1994	50%
1995	42%
1996	34%
1997	25%
1998	7%
1999	3%
2000	1%
2001	0%

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)?*

In the table: the percentage of PhD candidates who started their PhD in a certain year, but who ended their research without defending. These people do not get an interim qualification. (from: VSNU: KUOZ)

1986	10%
1987	8%
1988	11%
1989	9%

1990	7%
1991	8%
1992	8%
1993	8%
1994	9%
1995	8%
1996	9%
1997	6%
1998	5%
1999	6%
2000	4%
2001	2%

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

No, there is no central registration.

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)?

Most PhD candidates are considered employees. Only a minority is considered students. They earn a stipend. The biggest part of this group comes from abroad.

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

Unknown.

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)?

In the table, the salary of Dutch employee-PhD's according to the collective working agreement. Ca. 2000 euros is considered to be an average income in the Netherlands. Student-PhD's often earn about the same amounts of money, but have more costs (see part 1, question 11).

	From 1-09-2004	From 1-09-2005
First year	1813	1867
Second year	1867	2179
Third year	2179	2283
Fourth year	2283	2394

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 PhD candidates who are employees have normal workers rights and duties (see part 1, question 11).

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

A majority of the employees practices at least some teaching. It is part of their normal activities, which are not paid separately.

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

Although there are some exceptions, most employees teach 15% of their working time.

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

Unknown.

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)?*

In the table: the number of incoming PhD candidates until 2001. Note that from 1999, these numbers are without the candidates at the University of Amsterdam, which is one of the largest universities in the Netherlands. (from: VSNU: KUOZ)

1986	402
1987	1270
1988	1433
1989	1649
1990	1754
1991	1908
1992	2025
1993	1982
1994	1834
1995	1641
1996	1853
1997	1814
1998	2064
1999	1823
2000	1796
2001	1752

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

About 30% of the outgoing PhD students get a post doc position.

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)?*

Unknown. We do not know of any of such programs.

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

Unknown.

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?

PNN has fourteen institutional members, one of each large university.