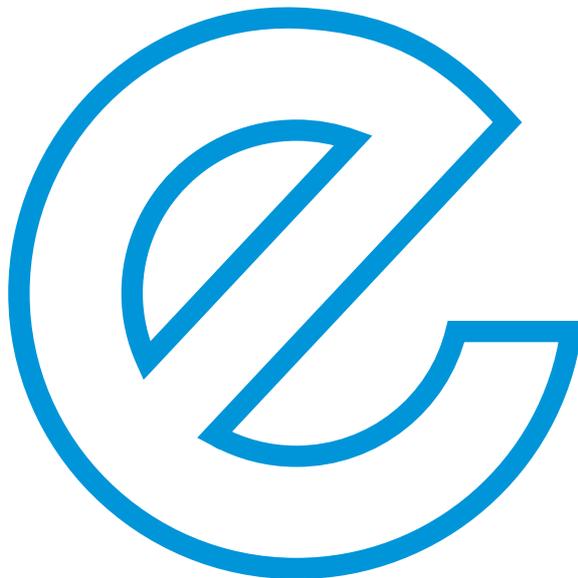


**THE SECOND ANNUAL
MEETING
OF THE EUA COUNCIL
FOR DOCTORAL EDUCATION**

**4 – 5 June 2009
University of Lausanne,
Switzerland**

EURODOC SPEECH



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The Second Annual Meeting of the EUA Council for Doctoral Education was held on the 4 – 5 June 2009 at the University of Lausanne in Switzerland. The main aim of the conference was to provide a possibility to discuss the following issues: supervision, research careers, internationalisation, research assessment and doctoral education, collecting data on doctoral programmes and the role of networks in European doctoral education.

Stakeholders from Europe and beyond took the opportunity and raised ideas and opinions about today's practices, as well as the future of doctoral education in plenary sessions, working group sessions and the speaker's corner.

Eurodoc, as one of the stakeholders, was invited to have a speech in Plenary Session II: Input from stakeholders. The speech – which was held by Karoline Holländer (outgoing president) and Nikola Macharova (incoming president) – presented status quo and future prospects from Eurodoc's point of view in its role as representative for doctoral candidates and young researchers.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me as the new President of Eurodoc – The European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers [and me as outgoing President] – to speak here at this conference.

We would like to address our special thanks to the organisers – especially the representatives of the European University Association and the University of Lausanne as hosts of the convention – for giving us the opportunity to speak on behalf of the European federation of national organisations of young researchers.

Eurodoc represents doctoral candidates and junior researchers in the form of a federation of national organisations. This means that one national organisation of doctoral candidates and junior researchers per country can apply to be a member to give their doctoral candidates a voice on the European level.

We have 32 members and each member can send maximum two delegates to the Eurodoc General Meeting. We have six working groups within: Career development, Mobility, Gender Equality, Surveys and two internal workgroups.

Eurodoc was accepted as a working partner in the Bologna process, to be able to represent the voice of and highlight the issues of doctoral candidates. Apart from that, Eurodoc is a partner of EC, EUA, Euroscience, ESOF and many other organisations that consult Eurodoc on questions concerning doctoral education and also on distribution of information to the doctoral level. So when we talk about networking later here – Eurodoc is a great example such a network, full with life.

We were asked to give our views for Europe's doctoral researchers on the six issues raised by the workshops. To reflect on what has been done and what the future prospects are.

Firstly:

Supervision in doctoral education

- Status quo:

The role of supervision in doctoral programmes and for the individual doctoral candidate can be looked upon as one of the most important factors in doctoral education. However, supervisors work differently in each country (even within each university, faculty or department). According to "Gathering of Evidence and Development of a European Supervision and Training Charter", 2004, Eurodoc (information gathered by Eurodoc delegates) even the literal meaning of the word for "supervisor" has a wide range of meanings. They could be directors, promoters, guides, instructors and so on. In each country in Europe, the standards for supervision are different, so the expectations of doctoral candidates are also different. Additionally supervision agreements are currently not used to a wide extent in Higher Education Institutions within Europe.

- Vision for the future:

Eurodoc recommends the development of common (or minimum) standards for supervision, to find ways to evaluate the standards on the country, university and programme-level. Here some framework conditions could help: e.g. supervision agreements and offers to train supervisors. Supervision agreements can be seen as an important tool suitable for setting standards. We believe that supervision agreements should include; skills development, explicit responsibilities of the doctoral candidate and the supervisor and a timeline for the doctoral programme. A performance review of supervision, recognising supervision in the profession, the use of supervision in promotion/HR development, creating workload models for supervisors and evaluation of supervision time are possible ways to address the development of quality in this field. Many of the visions mentioned here are already structured in "Supervision and Training Charter for Early Stage Researchers" (Eurodoc, 2004).

We suggest that work starts on a best practice paper for supervision agreements that contains example of good practice. It would be a pleasure for us to work with you together on such a paper, which could help us all to compare supervision more easily in doctoral education throughout Europe.

Research careers

We had a brief look into, what has been done so far.

- Status quo:

European level as well as (Eurodoc) instruments and guidelines on research careers state to that we want to:

- elaborate on enhanced and more visible career prospects,

→ But what has been done so far?

- sustainable career development systems at all career stages (regardless of contractual situation and of the chosen R&D career path),

→ Where do we find them?

- treatment of early stage researchers (ESRs) as professionals

→ Are we really doing this?

- improvement of the recruitment methods and career evaluation/appraisal systems,

→ Yes, we are working on it, but where exactly are we?

- aim for gender balance at all levels of employees,
- equal opportunity policy at recruitment and at the subsequent career stages,

→ How far are we today?

- equal treatment, selection and evaluation committees with adequate gender balance and
- inform all researchers on these provisions and arrangements.

→ Let's start putting all of this into action!

The status quo is that not much has happened concerning the development of these new instruments and guidelines.

- So what is the “Vision for the future”?

Eurodoc recommends developing clear guidelines and strategies for the purpose and content of the doctoral education. To reach this, a clear institutional strategy has to be developed: the importance of career development concerning the structures and programmes offered are important factors, but so is the individual researcher’s perception of the career perspectives at any single higher education institution.

→ Can I really become a professor?

→ How realistic is it?

→ Are they taking care of me?

Cooperation with external partners (Industry, NGOs, etc.) should be developed to give doctoral candidates the possibility to broaden their skills and make them employable. However, the importance of fundamental research should not be forgotten. A first step to enhancing career prospects would be to give access to research training and career advice to all doctoral candidates and in the sense of lifelong learning also to postdoctoral fellows and principal investigators especially concerning skills development.

A second step would be to develop new career structures and transparent development mechanisms for all, which would qualify the researcher for a job within or outside of academia ideally connected with a personal coaching programme.

We ask for a more holistic approach coming from the institutional level.

Internationalisation

- Status quo:

Internationalisation is strongly connected with mobility, but what internationalisation should encompass in doctoral education varies between universities. Although internationalising higher education institutions is one of the key strategies nowadays, many institutions are not working to remove obstacles to mobility that can be recognised as well as there being

a lack of the development of clear procedures to recognise of mobility.
Some examples of international activities are

- international projects with partner universities,
 - encouraging stays abroad within doctoral programmes,
 - supporting European and international joint doctoral programmes and co-tutelle arrangements,
 - offers of funding for internationalisation.
- Vision for the future:

Eurodoc recommends fostering internationalisation by increasing mobility through offering portable grants, social security and mobility of pensions, as well as internationalisation in the doctoral education by, for example

- optional stays abroad (could be both research stays attendance at conferences, courses...) - obstacles have to be identified and removed,
- use of new technologies, such as using teleconferences, e-learning etc.
- organisation of international workshops, conferences and summer schools and PhD courses
- recruitment of more international staff (obstacles to this should be identified and removed)

Research assessment and doctoral education

- Status quo:

The core component of doctoral training is the advancement of new knowledge through original research. It is essentially 'training by, not 'training for' research. Research Doctorates should be clearly discerned from other types of postgraduate education. Each country (some times even each HEI within a country) has different ways to evaluate research (if they do so at all besides potential mandatory reports to financial bodies). Talking about research assessment from the doctoral candidates' and junior researchers' perspective, means talking about measuring research. As research work consists of original ideas and creative work the question raises how and if research in doctoral education can be assessed and

developed at all. ECTS can not be seen as a measure for research work: The proper assessment for the result of the doctoral process is the quality of the research work as evaluated by peer review, not the performance in coursework. The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) is not an appropriate measure for the scale and complexity of core research work (though it is applicable to transversal skills components). This is where we are now.

- Vision for the future:

We ask for a more holistic approach! Eurodoc recommends developing standards and procedures of research assessment that take into account the creativity of research work. Measures such as peer review systems and citation indices have to be used with care, if implemented as measures for quality of doctoral research. Assessment of doctoral education from a Eurodoc perspective means evaluating the implementation of standards and goals in doctoral education that have been set on the European level. Documents issued by different stakeholders like the Charter & Code help to familiarise the national institutions with the goals that have been set. However, before an evaluation of these standards can take place on the institutional level HEI's have to implement these goals at least partially and in this way make them their own objectives. After implementation of these standards on the national, the university and the institutional level, change will filter down to the lower layers in the organisational structure – that is the department, the graduate school or the doctoral programme. Here standards on evaluation of skills and experience of researchers can be developed, as well as assessing the added value of a doctorate, the expectations and outcomes of doctoral programmes and duration of the doctorate. After setting the right criteria, the process of evaluation should lead to improvements on the programme level as well as providing feedback to all other levels of the institution, if necessary to improve the quality of processes higher up the ladder.

Don't forget who is in charge of the research - the professors - which is why an assessment strategy should start on the highest level of the institution.

Collecting data on doctoral programmes

- Status quo:

There is a lack of comparable data on doctoral programmes and on how the doctorate within Europe is perceived. Some outcomes from national surveys, or surveys only on some topics can be found. However, these only focus on single areas of the doctorate and do not give information which provides a "general overview" on the situation of doctoral programmes and doctoral candidates in Europe. Making decisions and recommendations without having data showing the whole picture complicates the situation. This is made even worse by the diversity and the direction of structural and organisational reforms in Europe, which have taken place during the last decade. A need for more systematic information has been acknowledged for some time. Currently some institutions are doing surveys on the European level to improve the situation. Some institutions are collecting information on the level of the doctoral programme to be able to improve the quality of their programmes. The question is, is the right approach? What does the time taken to get a degree tell us about the quality of the research work done?

- What about the future?

There is a lack of European register for doctoral candidates and even in those where doctoral candidates have to register they are out of the system after some years, in some cases (as we have heard here).

In fact Eurodoc has been working on a survey to find some comparable data on the situation of doctoral education in Europe. Now we are running it as the first Europe-wide survey of this kind. This survey could be conducted regularly as a panel to produce some longitudinal analysis of the situation, the improvements and the drawbacks. Apart from that it is questionable which data should be used in surveys on the institutional level. Only talking about quantitative data like number of courses or credits taken, time to degree etc. doesn't say much about the quality of the doctoral education. Taking into account how research can be evaluated and what the positive and negative effects might be, for example of peer reviews, have to be taken into account. Negative effects of only counting the publications could be a shift towards a publication overload in the doctorate and a shift away from the skills development part that is equally - if not more - important.

So we have to be careful about what we survey and which effects are likely to be produced by this.

The role of networks in European doctoral education

- Status quo:

Networking can be seen as one of the key-competences of researchers. Due to this fact Higher Education Institutions are encouraging young researchers to become active in all kinds of research and social networks. Networks are implemented on the level of doctoral programmes, the HEI-level, national and international levels, They can be subject-specific or interdisciplinary. Networks ensure the possibility to share knowledge, research, find connections; key reasons to establishing a network. Networks offer the benefits of sharing experience and best practice. To foster networking on the doctoral level, the availability of financial means is important.

- Vision for the future:

In an increasing global world with greater competition Europe needs to build a collaborative environment and share knowledge across borders in order to stay competitive. For this to become reality networks need to be established. It is therefore vital that doctoral candidates get a chance to meet and network with other doctoral candidates and other researchers. This will also intensify the quality of their own research due to knowledge transfer and improve their social skills.

However, it is one thing to start a network, but the most important factor can be seen in the lifetime of these networks. Giving incentives to doctoral candidates to improve their networking skills can be seen as a motivating factor towards this goal. However these incentives should not only be financial means, but other softer means such as; personal help and service and contact with the institution, because financial incentives may destroy the basic motivation of the doctoral candidates.

It is essential that Higher Education Institutions take up this opportunity to fully involve young researchers in the process.

There is still a lot of work and Eurodoc is committed to keep working on these issues.

Thank you very much for your attention! We will be around and are happy to continue the discussion!

Nikola Macharová
incoming president

Karoline Holländer
outgoing president



c/o Focus Research 63, Bd du Triomphe, Brussels 1160, Belgium, board@eurodoc.net, www.eurodoc.net