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Annual Meeting of the EUA Council for Doctoral Education (EUA-CDE):

Stakeholders lay foundations for the future of European doctoral education

The development of a European knowledge society is likely to drive demand in all sectors of workforce for PhD (doctorate) holders with the 'creative and intellectual skills' to work in a wide variety of roles – going well beyond research and development. More than 200 stakeholders meeting last weekend (4/5 June) at the Freie Universität Berlin for the Annual Meeting of the EUA Council for Doctoral Education, came together to discuss how universities should develop strong research-based doctoral programmes.

Over the last five years, there has been a major shift in the delivery of doctoral education in Europe. Around half of universities have already created new administrative structures, doctoral schools, to manage this part of their activities, and the traditional master-apprentice model is being replaced with structured PhD programmes.

Looking to the future, EUA Board member Giuseppe Silvestri told the audience that as providers of doctoral education universities must take responsibility for the changes and reforms in the coming years. In particular, he underlined "they must ensure that research environments (within universities) have the necessary critical mass" to be successful, and that administrative structures in place "create transparency and support the professional development of doctoral candidates".

Stakeholders also underlined that – in the light of the ongoing Bologna process reforms - it was crucial that the Doctoral degree cycle should not be treated in the same way as the bachelor and master degrees. This was due to the fact that the doctorate is based on original research and not teaching.

Due to the 'unique' role of research, it was suggested that many of existing Bologna tools (such as credit systems) were not applicable for the doctoral cycle. In particular, the idea of developing a special certificate for doctoral holders (to improve recognition, mobility and access to the workplace) was also raised at the meeting.

University leaders were also encouraged to promote risk-taking in the recruitment of doctoral candidates – by focussing more on the research potential of the candidate rather than his past academic record.

There was also a lively discussion on the development of specific QA systems that would be more suitable for doctoral education. There was a general consensus that such quality systems should use peer-review systems to improve the delivery of European doctoral education.

Presentations and further information from the meeting will be posted on the event website.
<http://www.eua.be/events/third-eua-cde-annual-meeting/home/>

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Notes to editors:

- The mission of the EUA Council for Doctoral Education (EUA-CDE), an integral part of the European University Association, is to contribute to the development, advancement and improvement of doctoral education and research training in Europe. With around 180 members, EUA-CDE fulfils its mission through the organisation of conferences, training seminars and other events on topics of interest to its members, the commissioning of research and analyses, advocacy, the provision of information and the dissemination of good practice. It also provides policy advice to the EUA on new trends and developments in relation to doctoral programmes and research training in Europe.