

Press release: 21 October 2010

Will Europe be the global leader in doctoral education?

EUA publishes recommendations for continued reform of doctoral education

The European University Association (EUA) has today published a series of recommendations for improving doctoral education in Europe, aimed at universities as well as governments and funding agencies.

The EUA 'Salzburg II recommendations' are the result of a wide consultation with the 185 members of the EUA's Council for Doctoral Education (EUA-CDE), and have been adopted today (21 October 2010) by EUA's governing Council at the beginning of its Annual Conference in Palermo.

EUA Secretary General, Lesley Wilson said; "These recommendations aim to make sure the momentum for doctoral reform which has been generated by the original Salzburg recommendations (published in 2005) continues to gather pace in the coming years. Europe is now emerging as a global leader in reforming doctoral education. In the space of just three years there has been a 'mini revolution' within European doctoral education: the number of universities setting up dedicated doctoral schools has more than doubled since 2007 (from 29% to 65%).

"This reform has been central to the development of both the European Research Area and the European Higher Education Area in the last years. Further doctoral reforms will be vital for the sustainable development of Europe and essential for the global research community. We hope Salzburg II will be another key milestone in the reform process," she added.

The EUA recommendations cement the basis of the doctorate as based on the practice of an original research project and thereby underline clearly that it is separate from the first (bachelor) and second (master) cycle. These are some of the key recommendations for universities:

- Institutions must develop a critical mass and diversity of research to offer high quality doctoral education.
- Doctoral education is increasingly managed by dedicated structures (within universities). These structures should be developed in such a way to strengthen research environment and not simply to create more taught courses for doctoral candidates
- Those running structured doctoral programmes should develop recruitment strategies that correspond to their particular mission and profile
- Supervision of doctoral candidates must be a 'collective effort' with clearly defined and written responsibilities for the main supervisor, doctoral candidate, doctoral school, research group etc. Providing professional development to supervisors is an institutional responsibility. Developing a common supervision culture shared by supervisors, doctoral school leaders and doctoral candidates must be a priority for doctoral schools
- Career support for doctoral candidates must take into account of their individual goals and motivations and acknowledge that a wide range of careers for doctorate holders now exist. It is the university responsibility to provide support structures for professional development. Offering training in transferable skills, including understanding the ethics of research, is central for taking this responsibility, and should be a priority for doctoral schools and programmes
- Universities should develop specific systems for quality assurance in doctoral education based on the diverse institutional missions and, crucially, linked to the institutional research strategy. Assessment of the academic quality of doctoral education should be based on peer review and be sensitive to disciplinary differences
- Internationalisation should be used as a tool by universities to enhance the quality in doctoral education and to develop institutional research capacity. (eg collaborative doctoral programmes, international joint doctoral programmes or joint, integrated curricula, joint committees and juries, and the joint degree). Mobility should be an integral part of a candidate's research project

- Credit systems are not a pre condition for successful doctoral programmes.

The 'Salzburg II recommendations' also call on governments and funding organisations, to remove a number of 'obstacles' to the future development of European doctoral education. They state that:

- Universities as well as doctoral candidates are still underfunded. High quality doctoral education requires adequate, sustainable and doctorate-specific funding opportunities
- Institutions need autonomy to be able to establish and be accountable for diverse structures with different research strategies and strengths
- Institutions must be able to independently develop their systems for quality assurance and enhancement within their national frameworks
- All stakeholders should engage in measures to facilitate co-operation with non-academic sectors for the mutual benefit of all partners. It is essential to create awareness about the qualities of doctorate holders as well as building trust between universities and other sectors. Such trust is for example built on formalised but flexible research and research training collaboration between industry and higher education institutions, including joint research projects, industrial doctorates or similar schemes.

Ends:

A full copy of the Salzburg II recommendations is available on request.

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Note to editors:

- In 2005, the original Salzburg Principles were established by EUA in the context of the Bologna Process as the basis of the reforms of doctoral education in Europe. The 2005 principles represent a key milestone in the reform process of doctoral education in Europe, as they drew new common directions from the diverse reforms ongoing at that time in European countries. Click here to download the original Salzburg declaration;
http://www.eua.be/Libraries/CDE_website/Salzburg_Conclusions.sflb.ashx
- The new recommendations are the outcome of the Salzburg II initiative, an intensive consultation with the members of the EUA Council for Doctoral Education (EUA-CDE), the largest and most comprehensive organisation concerning doctoral education in Europe. The outcomes of the consultations were discussed by the more than 220 participants at the Annual Meeting of the EUA-CDE at the Free University of Berlin in June 2010, representing 165 institutions from 36 countries