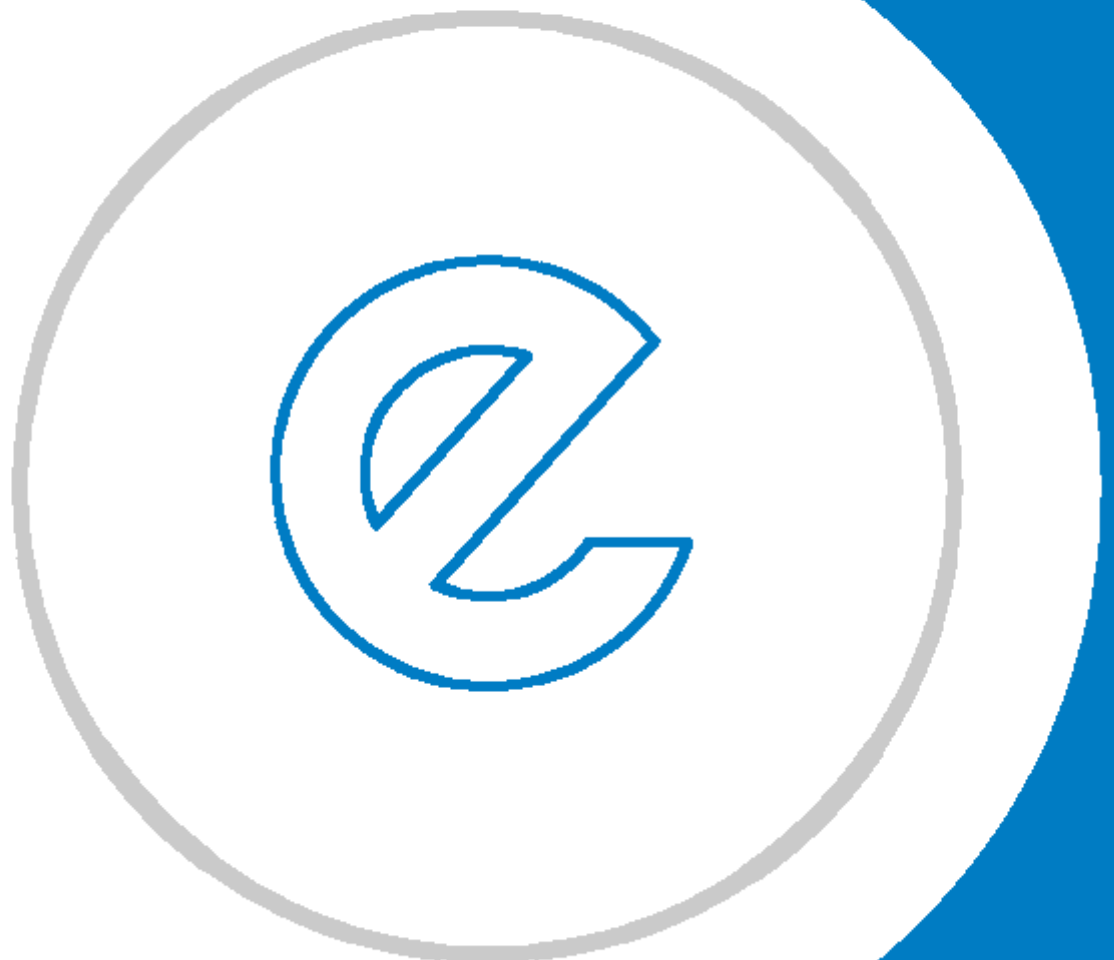


eurodoc

The European Council of Doctoral
Candidates and Junior Researchers

Eurodoc 2010 Conference

11 – 13 March 2010, Vienna



Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

it is an honour for me to welcome you on behalf of Eurodoc - the European Council of doctoral candidates and junior researchers - to the Annual Conference and General Meeting 2010 in Vienna.

Eurodoc was officially established in February 2002, but the first meeting of European young researchers goes back to March 2001. This meeting took place in connection with the meeting of the Ministers for Education and Science within the European Union in Uppsala, Sweden. It was organized by Sweden's Doctoral Candidates and Uppsala Student Union.

We are now in 2010 and I am pleased to stand here in front of you like previous Eurodoc presidents have been doing every year from 2001. It is a great success for us to organize such an event annually - a success which would not be reached without the help of the local organizing committees. This year, it was Doktorat.at and their team of young researchers who devoted their free time to Eurodoc and - on a voluntary basis but on a very high professional level - prepared this conference.

The topic of the conference this year is "Stocktaking and prospects: Doctoral Training and Research - The Link Between EHEA and ERA." The term "stocktaking" and the period of March is not chosen accidentally. The year 2010 is marked by several important milestones.

In Lisbon, March 2000, the Lisbon Strategy was launched and the Heads of State or Government agreed on an ambitious goal: making the EU "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion." (Lisbon Strategy, 2000) - The concept of ERA was created and was to be achieved within 2010. Moreover, 2010 was set to be the year by which a coherent and cohesive EHEA should be developed (The Bologna Declaration, 19 June 1999). Finally, 2010 is marked by 5 years of existence of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for Recruitment of Researchers, a document collecting a set of principles and requirements which specifies the role, responsibilities and requirements for researchers, employers and funders of researchers.

What has been done? Have the aims been achieved? What barriers and obstacles remain after almost 10 years of Eurodoc work by young researchers and doctoral candidates? We launched a European-wide survey on doctoral programmes and research related topics which also covered the social conditions of young researchers and doctoral candidates. Strong focus was put on topics mentioned in the

European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for Recruitment of Researchers.

About the Survey

Current knowledge about the situation of doctoral candidates in Europe is far from being satisfactory and adequate. In various discussions generated at a European level, in Bologna meetings and conferences, as well as in conferences on the development of the European Research Area (ERA), the same problem always came up: *The lack of comparable data.*

This Europe-wide survey of doctoral researchers was conducted in an attempt to answer a number of key questions concerning doctoral education in Europe and points raised also by the European Charter for Researchers which have remained unanswered. Besides contributing to the enlightenment of such issues, it also aimed at improving the situation of doctoral candidates and junior researchers within Europe.

The main questions raised by the survey were:

- What is the real situation, concerning current employment conditions, social benefits and working conditions, for doctoral candidates in Europe?
- Where are the real differences between European countries, cultures and models of doctoral education and what can we learn from them?

Eurodoc Survey

The survey was conducted from 10 December 2008 to 31 May 2009. It was the first survey on this scale and we conducted it in cooperation with the International Centre for Higher Education Research at the University of Kassel. In about half a year, almost 9 thousands respondents answered the survey.

Eurodoc's major goal was to get a comparative database on the European level on several topics, specifically the ones addressed by each of the survey sections:

1. Mobility
2. Career paths & Qualifications
3. Supervision & Training
4. Funding & Working conditions

The research instrument

A poll in writing was chosen as the research instrument, reaching participants via an online survey. To improve the quality of the results, the questionnaire was distributed via

e-mail and via newsletter, mailing-lists and web pages of all Eurodoc's member organisations.

The questionnaire included 77 questions and took about 30 minutes to complete.

To avoid the exclusion of non-English speakers, the survey was translated into other major languages e.g. Russian. Pilot tests were conducted in countries in which no similar surveys had ever been conducted before (mainly non-Western countries such as Croatia, Hungary, and Slovenia).

Respondents

The participants answering the questionnaire, depending on the country, were either

- students enrolled in doctoral programmes
- academic and research assistants working on their doctorate (or equivalent degree), or
- they had a mixed status, standing both as employees and students.

Eurodoc's first online survey on the situation of doctoral candidates in Europe was launched on the 9th of December 2008 and stayed online until April 30th. After a request from Eurodoc's national member organisations and a feedback from INCHER, it was extended until the 31st May, 2009 so as to give a chance for more doctoral candidates to fill in the Questionnaire.

After the data collection phase, data treatment procedures were applied. From the beginning, a few basic guidelines were settled in accordance to the study aims and research hypotheses to ease the joint effort. Countries in which the response rate was not high enough were excluded from country-wide comparisons.

The preliminary findings from the survey were presented in a first experts' workshop, in Bonn, 27th and 28th November 2009. On 1.5 days researchers and social scientists from all over Europe discussed survey's first findings and methodology. Conclusions from the workshop were that some further analysis of the data has to take place in the next couple of months. Still, work is in progress but today, we want to share some of our findings with you and discuss during these two days what is the reality, what we have learnt and what should be done in the future.

All this work until now was done on a voluntary base and we would like to thank the whole survey expert team who dedicated their free time to this big job. Only survey workshop, held in Bonn was supported by partners from European institutions.

The main findings of the survey will be the base for further discussions later today and tomorrow, during parallel work-group sessions.

When speaking about doctoral candidates in general, where they do come from, 4039 respondents (46,4%) indicated that they did not have any other work experience prior to starting on the doctorate, meaning they came more or less straight from the university after obtaining a Masters (or other) degree. The doctoral candidates, who indicate to have work experience, worked mostly for some time in the academic sector or in the private non-research sector.

Over 80% received funding for doing their doctorate, either as salary or as a scholarship. There was no difference between male and female respondents concerning the level of funding of their doctorates.

But what is remarkable, almost one fifth (18.4%) have answered that have not received or do not receive any funding to work on their doctorate.

Only 9% of the whole sample is aware of the '*European Charter for Researchers*'. As a consequence, 91% of the respondents don't know if their contract takes this European Charter into account.

Speaking about career development, the data show that most of the Doctoral candidates have received training during their doctoral studies (69.7%). Only 19.4% state the opposite, and 10.9% declare having received training outside their university

According to the data, training on theories and methods on research subject, as well as research ethics, can be both voluntary and mandatory. Training on transferable skills, language skills, teaching skills and information technologies are predominantly voluntary.

Working conditions: One fourth of the doctoral candidates inquired are to a very high extent working on tasks not directly related to their dissertation. These can be teaching duties, helping out in extra research work or, even being engaged in administrative activities. (here I go back to trainings doctoral candidates get - does s/he get a training how to teach when s/he has to teach? How can doctoral

candidate ensure quality of the teaching process if s/he is not taught how to teach?)

Even though doing research and writing the thesis are amongst doctoral candidates' highest priorities, it is interesting to notice that one third (31.8%) of respondents does not spend even an hour per week on the writing part of the endeavour. (once more, is this related to too many other activities/duties doctoral candidates has to do?, or we can also speak hear about quality of supervision?)

One very important role of the supervisor is to provide feedback with regards to the doctoral candidate's research and scientific work. But, in itself, to receive feedback is not enough. Doctoral candidates do need feedback, but what is more important to them is for the feedback to be useful. According to the results, 64.3% of the respondents state that the feedback they receive is either useful or very useful.

But what is the role of supervisor, what adequate supervision means? The Eurodoc survey shows that only 57% of the doctoral candidates in this study have guidelines or regulations on their supervisor's role. This means that 43% has either no clear insight into what they can expect from their supervisor or there are simply no rules and regulations governing the relationship between supervisor and doctoral candidate.

Mobility of researchers is considered to have beneficial effects for the individual researcher, as well as for the development of the European knowledge-based society. Therefore, mobility of researchers between European countries is an important recommendation in the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

One of the most important questions connected to mobility is how it is funded. The EURODOC survey gave a general picture on how young researchers finance their mobility experience. These results show that only 30% of doctoral candidates receive complete coverage of their stay abroad (most of them receiving scholarship) and that a large group is living on personal savings, support by parents, bank loans or even unemployment benefits during the mobility experience (approximately 20%). While funding within the framework of employment contracts should be the normal situation, only 20% of mobile researchers actually have employment contracts. As such, a large number of those who are mobile end up funding their mobility with private funds (e.g., family).

These are the main findings of our survey and we are looking forward to further discussions already today, in parallel workgroup sessions dedicated to Mobility and working conditions and Training and Supervision.

In few minutes, we will continue in our program in plenary session 5 Years of Doctoral Programmes in the Bologna Process, where we will focus on three questions: Do we have the right focus? What is missing? What have we learnt?

The sessions “Two Speed Europe” and “Research cooperation with countries outside of the EU” are dedicated to countries outside of the EU and question what is their potential and what kind of cooperation can be reached.

Dear friends, participants of Eurodoc2010, let me wish all of us fruitful discussions and let us together attempt to answer as many of these questions as possible.

On behalf of Eurodoc and Doktorat.at, I wish you successful event and pleasant time in Vienna!

Nikola Macharová
President of Eurodoc