

Doctoral Programmes in Europe

Nice 7/9 december 2006



WG1: Structure and organisation of doctoral education: Doctoral/ Research/ Graduate schools

I. Topic

Working group 1 will focus on structure and organisation of doctoral education, especially on the development of Doctoral/ Research/ Graduate schools.

II. Starting Point

The *Salzburg Principles* (2005) state: “Doctoral programmes should seek to achieve critical mass and should draw on different types of innovative practice being introduced in universities across Europe, bearing in mind that different solutions may be appropriate to different contexts and in particular across larger and smaller European countries. These range from graduate schools in major universities to international, national and regional collaboration between universities”.

The *Bergen Communiqué* refers to the “need for structured doctoral programmes” and much discussion since then has focused on the different ways in which countries and individual institutions are seeking to achieve such critical mass. This has also included structured dialogue with North American colleagues and the inclusion of a question on this issue in the TRENDS V questionnaire sent out to universities across Europe in order to prepare a more general report on Europe’s universities that will be presented to Europe’s Education Ministers in 2007¹.

III. Issues for Discussion

From this debate it appears that two main approaches to structure and organization of doctoral education still co-exist in Europe:

1. An individual study plan **developed** between a supervisor and a doctoral candidate with no structured coursework phase;
2. A structured programme organised within a broader research group or doctoral/ research/ graduate school with two phases: a taught phase and a research phase.

¹ EUA workshops held in December 2005 in London and in October 2006 in Brussels; EUA – Council of Graduate Schools US and Canada conference “Doctoral Education in a Global Context: Competition and Cooperation held in September 2006 in Salzburg; HRK conference “Comparing Forms of Doctoral Training in Europe and North America held in November 2006 in Frankfurt

There is a growing tendency in many European countries to move from individual study to the second model and both to develop structured programmes and to establish doctoral/ research/ graduate schools. According to the TRENDS V, out of 920 universities that responded to the questionnaire only 22% offer a model of individual doctoral study plan based solely on tutoring with a supervisor and 30% of institutions have now established doctoral schools.

However, discussions show that understanding of what is meant by a doctoral/ graduate/ research school differs from country to country and there is a risk that such diversity may generate confusion. As a general working rule the following definition is proposed: a **doctoral/ graduate/ research school can be defined as an independent organisational unit with a clear effective administration, strong leadership and specific funding supporting this structure.**

Models of doctoral/ graduate/ research schools show a broad diversity and co-exist in individual countries and universities:

- Graduate school – an organisational structure that includes all doctoral candidates and often also Master students across an entire university or at least a broad range of disciplines? It provides administrative support, organises admission, courses, seminars, deals with quality assurance and provides generic training.
- Doctoral/ Research school – an organisational structure that includes only doctoral students and may be organised around a particular discipline or research theme, or is focused on creating a research group/ network that is more project-driven. It may involve one university or several universities and organise co-operation among them.

IV. Workshop outcomes

- Areas of consensus
- Topics for further discussion