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ÖAD



On the 1/2 June 2006 the Austrian Presidency of the European Council hosted the conference

***“A researcher’s labour market: Europe – a pole of attraction?  
The European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for their  
Recruitment as a driving force for enhancing career prospects”.***

The high level conference was organised by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture in cooperation with the European Commission and the European University Association and was attended by 230 participants from 34 nations across the EU Member and Associated States.

One workshop specifically dealt with **“Doctoral candidates as young professionals: funding and supporting mechanisms”** and concluded:

With ambitious Lisbon objectives to increase the number of researchers in Europe and the 2005 Bergen Communiqué’s stronger emphasis on the importance of doctoral training and research careers, it is crucial to pay more attention to the funding of doctoral training. National policies in many countries follow the call to increase the number of new doctoral graduates, but an overview of existing funding policies is missing.

The workshop discussed the diversity of funding of doctoral programmes and doctoral candidates in different European countries and implications of funding on the quality and productivity of doctoral training. The topic is closely related to the principles and requirements of the European Charter and the Code. Three case studies brought different perspectives of the impact of funding on doctoral training and show good practice examples.

**The following points have been addressed:**

- Doctoral candidates should be treated as young professionals, young researchers. Whatever the form of their funding is (grants, fellowships, stipends or salaries), and whatever their status is (student or employee); they should have the right to social security. This is not the case in many countries (e.g. Portugal, Italy and France), where candidates are funded by grants without any social security.
- It seems that there is a tendency in Europe to replace salaries (labour contracts) by grants (often without social benefits).
- There is high professional uncertainty among doctoral candidates – no career prospects, lack of transferable skills that enable them to find proper jobs.
- A PhD degree lacks social recognition in Europe – it is not recognised and valued in all sectors.
- Post-doc positions are also underestimated in Europe – post-docs are often seen as either ever-lasting students, or as a cheap source of high quality labour. They have no long-term career perspectives, and the position is not recognised and valued outside academia.

- Career perspectives of young researchers are closely related to the need to increase inter-sectorial mobility. A lot of trust needs to be built between the sectors. Some countries (e.g. the Netherlands) have developed policies to support relationships, and mobility, between academia and industry. Others, such as Finland (University of Helsinki), started to raise awareness of the benefits of doctoral training among companies, with remarkable success.
- Funding of doctoral programmes remains a public responsibility. Governments should realise their crucial role in funding and supporting doctoral education, if Europe wants to become the most competitive knowledge-based society.

#### Examples of "good practice":

- The Finnish national doctoral school system proves to be a very efficient way of training doctoral candidates. Doctoral schools are established around thematic topics and are funded by the Ministry for 4 years. After evaluation, the schools can apply for renewal. Doctoral candidates, at doctoral schools, get salaries with full social security for 4 years of their doctoral training.
- In Germany, many graduate/doctoral schools are funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), and the German Research Foundation (DFG). Doctoral studies, at these schools, are based on a structured, research-oriented 1+3 year programme. Interdisciplinary courses, and generic skills training, are offered to doctoral candidates, to improve their career prospects outside academia.

#### Main conclusions:

- Funding and supporting mechanisms, in doctoral training, show broad diversity across European countries. Different schemes, channels and levels of funding, make it difficult for many doctoral candidates to get access to adequate financial support and to perform high quality research.
- Funding of doctoral programmes remains a public responsibility. Governments should realise their crucial role in funding and supporting doctoral education, if Europe wants to become the most competitive knowledge-based society.

#### Key messages and advices:

- > **Doctoral candidates** are researchers engaged in professional research training and they should **receive fair treatment, adequate funding and full social security**. This is still not the case in all countries. There seems to be an increasing tendency in Europe to award grants without any social security.
- > Position of a **postdoc researcher is very unstable in Europe**. Postdocs are highly qualified researchers who perform independent research, but are often **seen as ever-lasting students or cheap labour force**. It is important to recognise the value of their work and to improve their long-term career perspectives.
- > **Inter-sectorial relationship and mobility between universities and industry** has to be improved. Institutions and governments should develop **clear policies and strategies** to support and increase mobility between universities and industry and vice-versa.