

Final Conclusions - Preparing Recommendations for the London Communiqué

“Matching Ambition with Responsibilities and Resources”

I Introduction

1. Starting Point-The Bergen Communiqué: Ministers meeting in Bergen in May 2005 recognised that in order to *improve the synergies between the higher education sector and other research sectors and between the EHEA and the European Research Area* “doctoral level qualifications need to be fully aligned with the EHEA overarching framework for qualifications using the outcomes-based approach. The core component of doctoral training is the advancement of knowledge through original research. Considering the need for structured doctoral programmes and the need for transparent supervision and assessment, we note that the normal workload of the third cycle in most countries would correspond to 3-4 years full time. We urge universities to ensure that their doctoral programmes promote interdisciplinary training and the development of transferable skills, thus meeting the needs of the wider employment market. *We need to achieve an overall increase in the numbers of doctoral candidates taking up research careers within the EHEA.* We consider participants in third cycle programmes both as students and as early stage researchers.

2. Mandate: The European University Association, together with other interested partners, is asked to prepare a report under the responsibility of the Follow-up Group on the further development of the basic principles for doctoral programmes, to be presented to Ministers in 2007.

3. Methodology:

- Steering Committee: EUA, Austria, France, ESIB, EURODOC
- Terms of Reference endorsed by the BFUG
- Design of a specific “inner circle” of events, & also taking account of an “outer circle” of other events & analyses
- Consolidation of the work at the **Nice Bologna Seminar** followed by the preparation of a draft report for the BFUG in early 2007

II Taking action to follow up the basic principles adopted in Salzburg

The Bergen Communiqué took account of the 10 basic principles adopted in Salzburg. The further development of these ten basic principles requires action and commitment

from all the partners in the (Bologna) Process: governments, institutions, and their staff in partnership with doctoral candidates and other early stage researchers.

II.1. Setting the scene

In formulating the conclusions and recommendations that follow participants underlined the importance of the uniqueness of the doctoral cycle that provides training by and for research and is focused on the advancement of knowledge through original research. Participants furthermore reiterated the crucial role of the doctoral cycle in contributing to meeting Europe's research goals and in linking the European Higher Education and Research Areas.

1. *While doctoral programmes are unique they should not be considered in isolation but in relation to the implementation of the three Bologna cycles as a whole: a research component, and the development of transferable skills, need to be adequately included and developed throughout the cycles.*
2. *A range of innovative doctorate programmes are emerging to respond to the changing demands of a fast-evolving labour market. Employability of doctoral researchers both within and outside academic institutions, as well as individual and societal needs for lifelong education and training, have acted as a catalyst to the development of new programmes, including professional doctorates, more industrial collaboration and increased European and international cooperation.*
3. *Doctoral programmes are a key component of European higher education in a global context; questions of internationalisation and mobility, and the establishment of joint degrees at doctoral level, are central to institutional strategic development.*
4. *Greater attention is needed to the social dimension of the third cycle. Equity is a major concern. Equality of access to, and ability to succeed in, the third cycle must be a consideration, whether inequality derives from gender, ethnicity, financial situation or other circumstances.*
5. *Doctoral programmes are also crucial for fostering innovation and creativity in society, and it is vital to invest both in high quality disciplinary research and in inter-disciplinary and intersectoral programmes.*
6. *The need for greater and targeted investment in the third cycle is clear, and should be addressed as a matter of urgency. It should not be forgotten, however, that this also implies investment in the first two cycles. It is important, in particular, to ensure that second cycle (master) degrees are not only driven by market demand given the integral link between the second and the third cycle.*

II. 2. The role of higher education institutions

Higher education institutions fully accept their responsibility to develop and deliver high quality doctoral programmes. This requires autonomous institutions able to develop strategies and policies in line with their own missions and goals and *create the necessary framework conditions at institutional level that enable critical mass*.

2.1 Providing structure and organisation

Accepting responsibility for the provision of high quality doctoral programmes involves introducing the appropriate structures within institutions. Organisational structures chosen must demonstrate added value for the institution, in particular in seeking to :

- counteract the isolation of the early stage researcher, from other disciplines, or from the larger peer group, or the larger scientific community.
- establish transparency of expectations, quality and assessment standards (supervision etc.),
- create synergies regarding transversal skills development (at institutional or at inter-institutional level)

Different solutions may be appropriate to different contexts and the choice of structure is a matter for each institution, based upon the specific institutional aims which these structures are supposed to meet.

Recent developments and an analysis of practice across Europe points to the emergence of two main models of high quality, internationally oriented and networked doctoral/research/graduate schools as organisational structures:

- structures including master & doctoral candidates & providing crosscutting administrative, training and development support, or,
- structures including doctoral candidates only, around a research theme or a cross-disciplinary area & possibly including several institutions.

2.2 Developing attractive research career perspectives for early stage researchers

It is similarly the role of higher education institutions to take responsibility for:

- Promoting attractive research careers and career perspectives for doctoral researchers in collaboration with partners outside academia, thus promoting the development of clear career paths inside and outside academia and between academia and other sectors of employment
- Creating attractive conditions for research, in accordance with the provisions of the European Researchers' Charter & the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers
- Concentrating funding to create more effective PhD training

Post-doctoral researchers

European higher education institutions need to pay attention not only to the career development of doctoral researchers but also to the strategic need to make research careers attractive for post-doctoral researchers and to facilitate their career development. Clear academic career structures and a variety of career perspectives in academia as well as in industry, commerce and the public sector are needed, both for individuals and for Europe to compete on the global stage, taking account of the recommendations made under 4.1.

2.3 Ensuring access and admission

In a fast-changing environment, it is essential to maintain flexibility in admissions to doctoral programmes, and full institutional autonomy: diversity of institutional missions and context, and the growing importance of lifelong learning, mean that there are good reasons for different entry requirements in institutions and programmes provided fairness, transparency and objectivity is ensured;

The Bologna commitment that the second cycle gives access (= right to be considered for admission) to the third cycle should be maintained, but access to the third cycle should not be restricted to this route.

2.4 Enhancing the internationalisation of doctoral programmes

Mobility is an integral part of doctoral education at many universities. Higher education institutions should support enhanced mobility at doctoral level within the framework of inter-institutional collaboration as an element of their broader international strategy. Institutions, but especially public authorities, need to address legal, administrative and social obstacles, for example concerning visas, work permits and social security issues.

Both international and transsectoral and interdisciplinary mobility should be recognised as bringing added value for the career development of doctoral researchers and other early stage researchers.

Joint doctorate degrees, European doctorates and co-tutelle arrangements should be further developed and considered as an important instrument of international inter-institutional cooperation.

II. 3. Improving the Quality of Doctoral Programmes

3.1 Diversifying doctoral programmes

A number of diverse routes to the doctorate have been developed in Europe in recent years. These recent developments include doctorates tailored towards specific professions (so-called “professional” doctorates), joint doctorates and the European doctorate, and a variety of university-industry collaboration based doctorates.

All awards described as Doctorates should (no matter what their type or form) should be based on a core of processes and outcomes. Original research has to remain the main component of all doctorates. There should be no doctorate without original research.

Core processes and outcomes should include the completion of an individual thesis (based upon an original contribution to knowledge or original application of knowledge) that passes evaluation by an expert university committee with external representation.

Professional Doctorates

So-called “professional” doctorates are doctorates that focus on embedding research in a reflective manner into another professional practice. They must meet the same core standards as ‘traditional’ doctorates in order to ensure the same high level of quality. It may be appropriate to consider using different titles to distinguish between this type of professional doctorates and PhDs.

In order to ensure a broad discussion on this topic it will be important to ensure the dissemination of information on the rapidly growing number of professional doctorates – particularly in the UK but also in other countries - across the entire European higher education sector.

3.2 Supervision, monitoring & assessment

The importance of supervision, monitoring and assessment, as outlined in the Salzburg principles, must continue to be stressed, and universities encouraged and supported in the development and dissemination of good practices in the management of research degrees. Arrangements need to be based upon a transparent contractual framework of shared responsibilities between candidates, supervisors and the institution, and, where appropriate other partners, as indicated in the Salzburg recommendations. Attention should be paid in particular to ensuring: multiple supervision, the continuous professional skills development of academic staff and performance reviews of supervisors.

Multiple supervision should be encouraged, also at international level, through tutoring and co-tutoring by academic supervisors in different European countries.

Assessment of the thesis should be done by an expert university committee with external representation. The impact of the supervisor on the outcome of the process should be

limited. This does not preclude participation of the supervisor in the examining body, especially when this is a large body or when the thesis defence is public.

3.3 Transferable skills development

Transferable skills development, which should already be an integral part of first and second cycle study programmes, is also important in the third cycle, and should be developed in the context of overarching institutional support structures at doctoral level. The main goal should be to recognise and raise awareness among doctoral candidates of the skills they acquire through research, thus improving their employment prospects both in academia and on the broader labour market.

Ensuring that adequate funding is devoted to transferable skills development is crucial. It is likewise important to ensure that reference to transferable skills development is included in institutional quality assessment procedures.

II. 4. Public responsibility

4.1 Status and conditions of doctoral and postdoctoral researchers

Universities and public authorities in Europe share a collective responsibility to address the status and conditions of doctoral and post doctoral researchers. Doctoral candidates are early stage researchers who are vital to Europe's development and, as stated in the Salzburg principles, should have all commensurate rights.

Appropriate status and working conditions should also be recognised as essential for post doctoral researchers for whom clear academic structures and a variety of career perspectives are also needed. Post-doctoral researchers should be recognised as professionals with a key role in developing the European knowledge society, as underlined in the European Researchers' Charter and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. This implies that:

- The duration of the post doctoral phase without a clear career perspective should be limited to five years.
- They should be eligible to apply for national and international grant schemes to fund their research.
- Initiatives like the Independent Researcher grant scheme of the ERC should be encouraged.
- If the number of researchers is to rise and be covered by appropriate salaries, governments should invest more into research and social infrastructure for researchers in order to make the European Research Area more attractive.

4.2 Funding¹

Ensuring appropriate and sustainable funding of doctoral programmes and doctoral candidates as well as higher education institutions and their infrastructure is the 10th and final Salzburg principle, and quite simply needs to be implemented, given the crucial role of doctoral education and training as the key formative stage of a research career in both academia and non-academic sectors of employment and that because the attractiveness of a future career in research is determined largely at the doctoral stage. Hence the importance of ensuring status and financial support of the doctoral candidate, and of offering adequate incentives.

On the basis of the **provisional analysis of the questionnaires received from BFUG members** it is recommended that:

- Funding for doctoral candidates should be stable, covering the full period of the doctoral programme, and provide sufficient means to live and work in decent conditions.
- Funding should be sufficiently attractive to encourage suitably-qualified candidates from lower income groups, as well as sufficiently flexible to support the needs of part time students over a longer period of study.
- there is an urgent need for greater consultation and coordination at the national level between government ministries, research councils and other funding agencies (including European Institutions) on doctoral programme financing and career development.

Nice, 9 December 2006

Final recommendations, 6 January 2007, taking account of the feedback received from participants.

¹ This section is based upon the provisional analysis of the questionnaires received from BFUG members. The final results will be incorporated into EUA's report to the BFUG and will feed into the specific recommendations for action that will be made.