



Universities outline future priorities for improving the quality of doctoral education in Europe

Launch Conference for the European University Association Council for Doctoral Education (EUA-CDE), 1 – 3 June 2008, University of Lausanne, Switzerland

Brussels, 4th June 2008. More than 270 EUA members and partners gathered in Lausanne this week to agree on an agenda for improving the quality of doctoral programmes in Europe's universities.

Rectors, heads of graduate, doctoral and research schools, networks involved in doctoral training, and policy makers were taking part in the inaugural meeting of the **EUA Council for Doctoral Education**, a new structure created by the European University Association and dedicated to advancing doctoral education and research training in Europe.

As part of the debates at the meeting, discussion focused on outlining the 'key priority areas' to be addressed for advancing doctoral training in Europe. The following five themes emerged at the top of the list for European universities:

- Improving the **supervision of PhD candidates**, particularly through better training and monitoring of supervisors themselves;
- Enhancing **institutional cooperation**, notably through the development of joint doctoral programmes and double degrees;
- Introducing new structures (such as doctoral schools) within institutions to manage doctoral education;
- Better provision of **skills training for doctoral candidates** (particularly 'transferable' skills);
- Enhancing **quality control and evaluation of PhD programmes**.

There was also a clear call for the establishment of more structured doctoral programmes (e.g. in terms of curriculum design) and for improvements in student mobility (e.g. study periods abroad) and career development.

These issues will therefore be at the top of the agenda of the EUA-CDE in the next two years. The goal of the EUA-CDE, is to provide a framework to help universities across Europe deal with the challenges they face in improving the quality of doctoral programmes and training opportunities of young researchers in Europe. This is agreed by all, to be a 'must' if Europe is to improve its performance in research and innovation and thus its international competitiveness.

EUA President, Professor Georg Winckler, said the conference had been a resounding success underlining the importance of doctoral training to European competitiveness and giving a clear mandate for the EUA-CDE to concentrate the efforts of European universities in building capacity and improving the quality of doctoral education and training. It is also clear that universities will expect the EUA-CDE to play a key role in developing the global dimension of doctoral education, partnering and working with networks and organisations not only in Europe but worldwide.

Over the next two years, participants outlined a number of activities for the EUA Council for Doctoral Education that will be built into the organisation's work programme. These include establishing better data collection, analysis and sharing in the sector of doctoral education; the organization of thematic conferences and workshops to exchange best practice and networking; and the setting up of working groups/task forces to advance some of the key issues facing doctoral education.

EUA-CDE is pleased to announce that it will be organising a workshop focusing on 'Enhancing Supervision: Professional Development and Assessment of Supervisors' that will take place at Imperial College London, UK in January 2009.

To find out more about the new EUA Council for Doctoral Education, please visit www.eua.be/cde

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The European University Association, as the representative organisation of both the European universities and the national rectors' conferences, is the main voice of the higher education community in Europe. EUA's mission is to promote the development of a coherent system of European higher education and research.

EUA-CDE was established in 2008. It creates a strong voice for European universities on doctoral education both inside Europe and internationally and contributes to enhancing the visibility of doctoral/graduate/research schools and programmes. It builds on the outcomes of EUA's policy and project work on doctoral education and research careers, and seeks to respond to growing demand from members for a more structured supporting framework and additional opportunities to promote cooperation and exchange of good practice on issues of common concern related to the organisation and quality of doctoral education in universities across Europe.

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