

stocktaking and prospects

doctoral training and research

the link between EHEA and ERA

eurodoc annual conference and general meeting 2010

doktorat.at

Stephan Kurz

Opening Address

Distinguished guests,
Magnifizenzen,
Dear president,
above all, dear Eurodoc delegates and colleagues in pursuit of a doctorate!

Dear participants of this Conference,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you at Vienna University of Technology on behalf of the Local Organising Committee and Ms Esther Hutfless, president of doktorat.at, who unfortunately could not make it to open the conference herself.

Let me tell you, first of all, that for the last couple of months we've had a lot of fun while organising this conference, and I certainly hope you will have some fun as well.

However, the main goal of this gathering of doctoral candidates, young researchers and Higher Education stakeholders from all over Europe is a serious one:

The task for the upcoming days is to discuss the status quo of doctoral programmes in the European framework of the Higher Education Area and the European Research Area, and to develop policy recommendations from our discussions.

Yesterday, we were at the festive event of the Ministerial Summit, celebrating the Higher Education anniversaries of 2010 behind riot police barriers:

**** 10 years of European Research Area***

The concept of the European Research Area was proposed by the European Commission in January 2000 and endorsed as an objective in the Lisbon Agenda of the European Council.

**** 5 years of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers***

This document collects a set of principles of good practice for researchers, research funding and research performing institutions with the aim of making the European Research Area more attractive. It was prepared with substantial effort by Eurodoc and presented by the European Commission representative during the Eurodoc 2005 conference.

**** 5 years of doctoral programmes as part of the Bologna Process***

Although doctoral programmes were first mentioned in the Berlin Communiqué of 2003, substantial discussions on the role of doctoral programmes in the Bologna process started only in 2005 with the Bergen Communiqué.

After yesterday's celebrations, which I hope did not affect your ability to stay alert and awake, it is now time to switch back to work.

A lot has been done, but also a lot remains to be done. The rash implementation of doctorates within the „Bologna“ structure has led to rather quick reforms which clearly need some critical assessment. Jean-Patrick Connerade made an important remark last year at the Eurodoc 2009 conference in Banská Bystrica that it is us who are there to start calling a spade a spade.

And it is precisely this reason why we are here: because we have something to achieve, something that we strive for together (and, of course to have some fun along the way).

We have common ground in our aim, which is to ensure that the doctorate and doctoral education is a good place to be – in all its facets; be it Supervision and Training, be it Mobility Concerns, be it Gender Issues, or be it Career Opportunities within and after a doctoral project, there is room for improvement.

“Stocktaking and prospects: Doctoral Training and Research – The Link between EHEA and ERA”

The goal for the upcoming two days is to listen to, as well as to share great ideas concerning all those fields of discussion. The goal is to take stock, to assess the current state of affairs in doctoral studies throughout Europe. Afterwards, we will try to summarise all the input from plenary sessions, workshops, and discussions that will emerge after the official conference times. An important source for our stocktaking will be the Eurodoc Survey, which was conducted in 2008/2009 as the first source of comparable data concerning doctoral candidates from all over Europe. Later in this session, Nikola, Eurodoc's president, will present some of the key findings of this project. Our speakers will contribute their views. In the closing session tomorrow before lunch, we will compile outcomes of the conference.

After the conference, Eurodoc will continue with its Annual General Meeting which will top off this event.

When I mentioned earlier that “we” have had a lot of fun organising this conference, I was referring to doktorat.at, the Austrian platform of representatives for doctoral candidates.

doktorat.at was only founded in 2005, when local students unions' committees of some Austrian universities and the ÖH (the Austrian Students Union) recognised the urgent need to fill the gap between science and research policy and the universities' own ideas on the future doctorate.

Bringing together doctoral candidates from various disciplines, doktorat.at has since then worked hard in three main areas: 1) Introducing the interests of doctoral candidates in national and European research and education policy and pointing out problems and issues concerning doctoral candidates, suggesting solutions. 2) Providing information for doctoral candidates both from in- and outside Austria, thereby filling in for what Austrian universities neglected as their duty for too long, and 3) facilitating communication and networking between the local doctoral candidates' representatives.

On a more global level – together with Eurodoc – we keep striving to make the doctorate a better place to be and we continue to bring in the Austrian point of

view and our own experience from debates with national stakeholders. We deem our work since 2005 quite successful, and we will continue in a critical dialogue with the Austrian universities. The rapid changes after the inclusion of the doctorate into the Bologna Process have raised a lot of public awareness, and this was one of the main motivations to organise this conference, here and now, at the same time and place as the Ministerial Summit takes place.

It is bottom-up organisations like doktorat.at and Eurodoc as their European umbrella organisation who are there for the sole purpose of bringing in the young researchers' views to make research and research-based training nothing more – but also nothing less – than: a better place to be.

Next to all the anniversaries, this conference should be used to make a strong statement for research: thoughts and bright ideas of young researchers, of people genuinely interested in their fields of study, of us are there to set the foundations for the future. Investing in that future is crucial, and it might even prove cheaper than bailing out banks...

Ever since the European Enlightenment, it has been agreed that to broaden your horizon, to “boldly go where no man has gone – before” in Science, not only in Fiction, has value for our societies. This principal understanding is the foundation for what we are aiming for at this conference: Making the doctorate a better place to be. And let us not forget about having some fun, too.

Before I finish, I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge institutions and sponsors who helped making this conference possible.

First of all, I would like to thank Eurodoc's board of 2009 who did an amazing job and also went through enormous efforts in the last weeks while preparing this conference and Annual General Meeting. Thank you Nikola, Nadia, Elena, Zaza Nadja, Ing-Marie, Darius and Sverre!

I would also like to say special thanks to the Austrian Federal Ministry for Science and Research which provided substantial support.

Since it would require a lot more time to go through the extensive list of all the sponsors – let me just say a big “thank you”.

Before I finish my introduction, I would like to acknowledge another institution to which we are grateful: Vienna University of Technology, which has been a great and reliable partner to work with, and their support truly deserves an extra applause.

Dear Rector Skalicky, we are happy to be here, and we already feel at home at your university.

Thank you very much, and I wish all of us a successful conference!

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