

Meeting of General Directors of Higher Education
and Presidents of Rectors' Conferences of the EU/EEE

**Workshop on Mobility in Doctoral Studies:
A European perspective**
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Introduction

In the field of university education we have come quite a long way in the knowledge and acceptance of the different structures that exist in Europe, without losing sight of the situation of the United States and Latin America. In particular, the documents presented at the Halmstad meeting in May 2001 made it possible to advance in a better knowledge of postgraduate studies.

The mobility of European students driven by various community projects, mainly the ERASMUS programme, has been bringing about slow but profound changes in the attitudes and day to day of universities. Universities have had to take on the organisation of agreements as an institution, solve the problems of equivalent studies and develop solid internal operating structures. In this process there has been a need, now urgent, to establish a framework to solve not only the difficulties of mobility in European programmes but the recognition and understanding of the different university qualifications and degrees. It is a fact that the appearance of these problems currently involves the university as a whole and involves educational administrations.

Paradoxically, efforts targeted at the development of mobility programmes in degree studies, reasonable since they host the majority of students, have somewhat left out the development of specific community programmes for doctoral studies, understood as those that end with a research thesis and are therefore in the minority. These studies that from a long time ago and through various national initiatives have included mobility as an important part of the student curriculum require, in my opinion, the impulse and design of specific programmes on a European scale.

We consider the following flexible structure of degrees which is generally accepted in proposals for European harmonisation:

A professional degree after 3 or 4 years. (*Bachelor, Bachelor Honours*)

A specialised postgraduate degree after 5 or 6 years. (*Master*)

A doctorate aimed at research after 8 years. (*Doctor*)

This workshop aims to analyse the situation of studies that finish with the doctorate and, to conclude, to obtain some proposals in order to drive inter-university mobility and co-operation at this final stage of university studies.

Situation in Europe

Within the European processes of convergence and harmonisation there is a growing interest in the aspects relating to doctorate studies and postgraduates in general, an interest that is reflected in the various documents and debates that have arisen recently, amongst which it is important to mention that of the previous meeting in Halmstad.

The mobility of students and teachers appears as one of the driving forces of European harmonisation and co-operation in the field of higher education.

From analysing the results of the latest studies on the specific doctorate level, it is deduced that the different European systems have more common aspects than divergences and that, regarding the richness of the existing diversity, convergence is feasible within the short term. Currently, it is important to highlight three aspects that, as far as I am concerned, must be analysed to make headway in obtaining more mobility of students and teachers in our common area:

1. Access to doctoral studies

- Free with an entry exam
- Previous degree qualification
- Previous postgraduate qualification
- Other

Barriers to mobility

The different entry criteria

The recognition of previous foreign qualifications for entry.

2. The structure of the doctoral programme

- Two stages: one aimed more at advanced training (which we call teaching) made up of courses and work or thesis projects and another directed at investigation (which we call research) dedicated to the preparation of a doctoral thesis with original results.
- A stage made up of just teaching (courses and work or project)
- A stage made up of just research (thesis)

Barriers to mobility

In the event of two stages, recognition of the first.

In the event of a single teaching stage the confusion of the name doctor, especially in more professionalised studies (medicine, engineering, architecture etc.)

In the event of a single research stage, the entry requirements for students of another system.

In general, recognition of the origin of the doctorate and the recognition of part time studies or, for teachers, periods spent abroad.

3. Financing

- National programs
- European programs
- Grants and aid for the student
- Incentives for teachers
- Infrastructures and equipment

Barriers to mobility

In Europe, the lack of co-ordination between the mobility actions of the various programmes, especially in the most direct programmes of student and teacher mobility (SÓCRATES/ERASMUS, etc.) and research programs (6th framework program etc.).

Lack of specific programmes for doctorates.

Few grants awarded.

Nationally, few incentives for mobility of teachers and lack of incentives to host foreign students.

The removal of these and other barriers, mainly linguistic problems and the lack of adequate financing instruments, requires a series of actions targeted at more transparency in the situation in Europe, the setting up of international agreements, suitable economic support from national and European bodies and the development of an active policy of attracting and welcoming students (not only European, also from third countries).

Types of mobility

Of course, the mobility of students simultaneously requires the corresponding mobility of teachers, tutors and thesis supervisors.

	Teaching phase	Research phase
A complete phase of studies in a different university to that university of origin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To obtain a postgraduate degree prior to the doctorate (DEA, Master, etc.) Between one and two years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To prepare and defend a doctoral thesis, with the awarding of a doctorate in the host university Between two and three years.
Part time studies at a different university to the one of origin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Periods abroad, such as ERASMUS, to carry out studies. Between 3 months and a year with recognition at the university of origin. Periods abroad to prepare work or a project prior to the research thesis. Between 6 months and a year. With recognition at the university of origin. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short periods abroad of one to six months to get bibliographical references or documents of another type, learning a specific technique, etc. Long periods of a year or year and a half to carry out part of the thesis (<i>sandwich grants</i>) Co-supervision of doctoral theses with a double title. Minimum period at the two universities of six months and mutual recognition of the studies at both. European doctorate: periods of a minimum of three months at other universities and international examining board for the thesis. European mention in the doctorate

In each case, the development of specific programmes, the acceptance and recognition of the educational administrations and the agreement of the participating universities is required.

Some possible actions

- Establishment of basic agreements by discipline or areas of knowledge.
- On the basis of this, preparation of a chart of equivalent studies, for entry to the various stages of postgraduate studies, agreed between the different educational administrations.
- Introduction of a transparent system of assessment and recognition of these studies.
- Removal of restrictions to professionally carry out doctorates in different European countries.
- Promotion of inter-university agreements for the exchange of students and teachers.
- Development of specific programs, national and community, to finance mobility and establishment of university networks.
- In the case of teachers, recognition and assessment of the activity carried out in the other university.
- Financial impulse and support on the part of national and European institutions for learning languages (presential and *on line* courses)

Proposals for the promotion of mobility in doctoral studies

1- Consolidation and promotion of the European Doctorate mention

The European mention in Doctorates has arisen as an initiative of the "Confederation of European Community Rectors' Conferences" in March 1993. Its introduction, voluntary for each university, has been unequal both in the different countries and universities and in the various disciplines. In Spain, approximately 70% of the universities have included it, with slight variations in their regulation..

The main requirements are:

- 1- Carrying out, during the doctorate studies, a period of a minimum of 3 months at a higher education institution of another European country.
- 2- Preparation and presentation of, at least, the summary and conclusions of the thesis in a different language to that of the country of origin.
- 3- Reports of a minimum of two experts from two different European countries from the country of origin and different to the thesis supervisor/s.
- 4- Inclusion of, at the minimum, one foreign expert in the thesis examining board.

Proposal:

The educational administrations of the European countries and the vice-chancellor associations should carry out campaigns to promote and advertise this mention, introducing the relevant measures for its introduction, recognition and assessment. These measures should include specific programmes for financing the mobility required.

2- Setting up European university thematic networks

Currently there are various initiatives, in specific thematic fields for the development of European doctorates by means of inter-university agreements. Amongst them, the following are worthy of mention: the bilateral agreements of co-supervision of theses, doctorates promoted by laboratories and European associations in specific areas (European molecular biology laboratory, European astrophysics association, etc.) and the actions targeted at training researchers of the consecutive framework programs of the EU.

Within the actions aimed at the European convergence of higher education and due to the Commission initiative, a pilot program is being developed for the harmonisation of the structures and contents in five specific degree disciplines through "Tuning educational structures in Europe" networks.

Nevertheless, there are no general initiatives for the setting up of university networks for the joint development of doctorate programs.

Proposal

Creation of a European programme, with the collaboration of national administrations, for the financing and development of thematic networks in the doctorate with the following requirements:

- 1- Participation of a minimum of three universities from three different countries.
- 2- Signing of inter-university agreements that include:

Teaching stage

- 2.1 Short periods (minimum 3 months) at another university of the network for the students registered on the teaching stage program.
- 2.2 Exchange of teachers to give courses from the programme (minimum one teacher from each participating university)

Research stage

- 2.3 Supervision in a system of co-supervision (minimum two countries) of the doctoral theses with periods abroad of a minimum of 6 months for students at this stage and short visits for the co-ordination of the thesis co-supervisors.

- 3- Recognition, by all the universities of the network, of the doctorate and European mention for the thesis carried out in the programme.