

Communiqué

High Level Dialogue on Excellence in European Doctoral Training, Aarhus, September 20th /21st, 2012

On September 20-21, 2012 Aarhus University and the University of Edinburgh invited a group of high level representatives from universities, university organisations, the European Commission, and research bodies to a meeting in Aarhus, Denmark, to debate Excellence in European Doctoral Training.

The meeting was called by Rector Lauritz B. Holm-Nielsen, Aarhus University, and Principal Sir Timothy O'Shea, the University of Edinburgh, at the April 2012 Conference on Research Excellence at Aarhus University. Reforms in European doctoral education are increasing their pace and the third cycle plays a key role for the development of European Research Area and the Innovation Union. The meeting provided the opportunity to take stock and discuss next steps for Europe.

All participants recognized the importance of the Salzburg II principles and the principles for Innovative Doctoral Training. Taking these documents as a solid platform, Europe is challenged by the need to make further progress towards a common understanding of excellence in doctoral training as noted by the Ministers responsible for higher education in the 2012 Bologna Communiqué.

Key recommendations emerging from the event for consideration of a model for excellence in European doctoral training were:

- To focus on and take steps to build an explicit international dimension into arrangements for examination, supervision and the doctoral experience.
- For the completion of high quality independent research in an active and vibrant research environment to be at the centre of the doctoral experience, and for this to be the basis for the award of a doctoral degree.
- For the key output of the doctorate to be the researcher themselves and for there to be an explicit focus on personal and professional development throughout the doctoral period.
- For this to be supported by the production of a doctoral supplement where the doctoral candidate will reflect on their development and where broadening elements of the doctorate will be recorded, including training and other professional development activities.
- To develop innovative approaches to training and support for doctoral candidates, with a particular focus on employability and mobility.
- To consider and strengthen approaches to employer engagement (e.g. placements, contributions to training, dialogue between employers and academia including doctoral candidates), and for this to include employers not traditionally associated with the recruitment of doctoral graduates.
- To address the support and training needs of doctoral supervisors.

Edinburgh University and Aarhus University have agreed to work together to develop and pilot doctoral provision that addresses these issues including courses in transferable skills, development of PhD supervisors and international doctoral summer schools.

The participants acknowledged that progress towards a common understanding can only be made through continued discussion and sharing. Against this background, the Aarhus meeting on Excellence in European Doctoral Training is intended as the beginning of a broader debate across Europe with a follow up event



planned for 2013 at the University of Edinburgh. Information on the Aarhus event can be found on www.doctoralexcellence.dk

Participants in the High Level Dialogue in Aarhus were:

Dorothy Kelly, Executive Board Chair, The Coimbra Group

David Gani, Governor, The Career Development Organisation and founding member of the Scottish Researcher Careers Coordination Forum

Alexandra Bitusikova, Vice-Rector for Research, Matej Bel University in Banska Bystrica, Slovakia

Peter van der Hijden, DG Research and Innovation, European Commission

Zdravko Lackovic, President, ORPHEUS

Vaclav Hampl, Rector, Charles University

Slobodan Radičev, President EURO-DOC

David Bogle, Head of University College London's Graduate School and chair of LERU's Doctoral Studies Community

Katrien Maes, Chief Policy Officer, LERU

Janet Metcalfe, Chair and HEAD of VITAE

Timothy O'Shea, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, University of Edinburgh

Lauritz B. Holm-Nielsen, Rector, Aarhus University and Vice-Chair, EUA

Lise Wogensen Bach, Vice-Dean, Aarhus University

Johnny Laursen, Head of the Graduate School of Arts, Aarhus University

Mary Bownes, Senior Vice Principal External Engagement, University of Edinburgh

Jeremy Bradshaw, Dean of Postgraduate Taught & International, University of Edinburgh

Observers:

Jon Turner, Director, Institute for Academic Development, University of Edinburgh

Mike Mulvany, Vice President at Orpheus and professor, Aarhus University

Kristian Thorn, Deputy University Director, AU Research and Talent, Aarhus University

Kirsten Wisborg, Head of Talent Unit, Health, AU Research and Talent at Health, Aarhus University

Jeppe Dørup Olesen, Head of Central Talent Unit, AU Research and Talent, Aarhus University

