

## CYCLE III, DOCTORAL STUDIES: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

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Doctoral Studies in Europe have felt a major change in the last decade. Doctoral studies in the European Union are the main platforms for the training of researchers of excellence, which give the international visibility and impact of the European research.

The value and importance of the doctoral studies is a key issue for the creation of the European area of knowledge. Radical changes in education have emerged in response to the environmental European challenges, determined by the following moments:

- the process of globalization and regionalization has formed a new structure of the labour market, which requires a more special professional qualification;
- the launch of the agenda of the European Community with regard to education and research, that pretends to transform Europe into the most competitive world economy based on knowledge;
- implementation of the European initiative for the development of the educational system by launching the process of Bologna, which aims to create a European area of higher education through targeted reforms to more effective cooperation between European universities in order to increase the quality of studies, to promote the mobility of students and teachers and to enhance the level of graduates employment.

The Bologna process is implemented by most European countries, including countries with extensive experience in development of higher education as well as those that are in line with the principles of European education.

Often through the implementation of the Bologna process means standardization of the educational systems throughout the European space. This process impeaches, even frightens many academics, which see in this process a risk for the diversification of types and the university educational models. Looks that this process quickly appears as a process of harmonization, taking into account the diversity of cultural and educational richness, the traditions of the European research, that being active effective attract the best students. In the global fight for the conquest of contemporary

talent will come out winning and it will be successful only those European universities, which find the best ways of communication and collaboration with the environmental educational and economic entities.

The process of Bologna recognizes doctoral studies as University cycle III. In Europe today, these studies are recognized as postgraduate research and targeted to applicants from these studies are appointed doctoral students, who, as a rule, are those who wish to make a career Of professor within the educational system.

The European University Association (EUA), an independent organization, located in Brussels, has begun discussions about the directions of development of doctoral studies since 2003. The main purpose was to make a clarification in the complex series of approaches in the field of European doctoral education. On the basis of the on-going research it was the necessity to activate efforts to reform the doctoral studies in order to improve quality and increase the attractiveness of the European doctoral studies through radical changes in the organization of doctoral education, but taking into account their wealth diversification.

Research has shown that diversity is a key moment in the organization of doctoral education in Europe. In the majority of European universities up not long ago doctoral studies were organized in format of individual studies, based on collaboration between PhD candidate and advisor of the doctoral thesis. Phase of studies did not include a structure of studies, based on the theoretical and practical hours. But this model of studies increasingly was questioned by the academic world. Recent changes have designated in many countries a trend towards European establish a structured programs in two phases, one focused on studies and other on research, organized in the format of the Doctoral School or research school. Research Association of EUA shows that over 30% of universities have introduced alongside the traditional models of individual study also Doctoral Schools. In the opinion of those who argue the traditional format of doctorate organizing is the view that this form is more efficient in social research, humanities and art.

Approach and opinions about what is a doctoral or research school is different. The

diversity of names, models often brings confusion even in the academic world. The opinion that increasingly prevails in Europe is that the Doctoral School is an organizational independent unit (a structure) organized in the framework of a university or the few universities with an administration and clear management, and specific funding support. In the United Kingdom the corresponding studies are organized in University structures intended for doctoral students and, sometimes for trainers of master's degree which manages the admission, offers courses and seminars, trainings on generic domains, are responsible for the supervision of the doctoral students and ensure the quality of doctoral theses.

In Nederland, Germany, and Turkey so structures are organized just for doctoral students in the University structure, organized for inter-university or a particular disciplinary domain (Doctoral School in Economics) or interdisciplinary (Doctoral School in the environmental research), research unit, or a research group, project or network (an example is the Doctoral School based on the project in the field of the history of Central Europe). Such a model, typically involves a University (it is the case of Finland, Norway, Denmark and Nederland), but may be based on close cooperation between several universities (if encountered in France) or on the cooperation between universities and research units (case met in Germany).

None of these models is not pure. Countries or even some private universities may adopt more models, which rely on the educational and research traditions, national legislation and financing conditions.

Many European universities, by implementing new models of organization of doctoral studies want to preserve diversity. From the point of view external diversity of the education doctoral structures can be confusing, but their motto is "a goal can be achieved through different ways".

According to new modern research structures listed have many advantages. They bring the environmental research incentives, creates a critical mass and helps young researchers to overcome isolation, forms a symbiosis between young researchers and those with experience, assist and improve the management, make the process of admission more transparent through the use of clearly defined procedures, ensure reading and generic skills training, ensures the monitoring and quality assurance, increases the opportunities for collaboration between universities, increases the mobility of interdisciplinary. Universities which

have introduced so Schools in the last decade already seeing good results in systematic and structured evaluation of the quality, implementation of the monitoring process, which include the use of the individual development plans with well-defined training schemes, tasks and deadlines, and half-yearly reports, regular independent reviews of advisors, log sites and Web pages where students postgraduate students and display the results and performance of digital platforms in the studies, which facilitates the next communication between the doctoral student and advisor, and communication between postgraduate students themselves and the research community.

Creating Doctoral Schools, structuring programmes, improving the monitoring of the management, the determination of the funding schemes led to decreasing the period of development and support of the thesis. Duration of official doctoral studies recommended by the process of Bologna is 3-4 years, even if getting the final degree of doctor takes from 4 to 5 years.

New organizational structure brings together with the innovation and other aspects of doctoral education, particularly in the activity of the advisors. More national evaluations in Europe, assessments carried out by doctoral students themselves, show a strict necessity to improve the quality standards of the guidance by the head of doctoral studies and to develop practical effective methods for training and advisor's support. One of the best practices introduced in some European universities is the introduction of a contract, which includes a clear plan of studies and research and determines responsibilities and rights of the parties, signed by the doctoral student, the head of the doctoral studies and the University.

Success has a new model and the use of management, when the doctoral student is guided by several advisors (consultants), one of which is primary. A model is used when an advisor is responsible for the administrative phase and studies, the other one by the phase of research. The last is often in research or in the industry. The collaborative aspect of PhD and doctoral advisor is a very important moment which should not be underestimated. Advisorship by many advisors of the doctoral theses may prevent some problems which may arise in the case when the theme of the research is at the boundaries of areas of research or the case when the advisor can absence on a longer period than usual.

Professional development of advisors is also a thing very much discussed. Finding optimal variants of achieving such activities would lead to

the improvement of assistance for doctoral student. Some European countries put special emphasis on the training of advisors thus the professional development representing a requirement especially for those who want to become the advisor of the doctoral thesis.

In the vast majority of universities just teachers or university professors with a long career research and excellent results in research entitled leading the doctoral students. The idea of training for potential advisors is accepted by many countries. Such countries like the United Kingdom, Sweden, Denmark and Finland have already introduced practices of doctoral training for advisors and some universities such training is a precondition to receive the right of the doctorate advisorship. To attract experienced advisors and for improving the quality of education some universities organize interactive seminars to discuss good practices to be followed.

Diversity of doctoral education in Europe can be confusing at first sight, but it reflects the diversity that exists on the entire continent. After hundreds of years of development, Europe represents the different cultures and identities, as well as different approaches to education and research. In the era of globalization, Europe cannot rely on the distinguished academic and research history. The reform of doctoral education in Europe is just a response to the national and global development. The European Universities have to deal with these challenges by working and cooperating together, exchanging experience, learning from one another, cooperating with and thus becoming more powerful.

Universities in the Republic of Moldova render the fact of need reorientation of doctoral studies towards a process of knowledge and innovation, the educational way put on sustainable principles, to ensure the quality and efficiency based on the educational structures, allowing the sustainable intensification of the process of preparing, enhancing the responsibility of organizing and scientific cooperation for doctoral students. Implementation of sustainable cycle III doctoral studies at Moldovan universities requires essential preparation at both the national level, and at the institutional level. Effective and efficient implementation of cycle III doctoral studies requires, first, to adjust the legal framework of the Republic of Moldova to European educational criteria.

The necessity of reforming doctorates is justified and by the conclusions of the study compared carried out within the project TEMPUS

SCM-T002A06-2006, attended by leading universities in the country, which are jointly shared by all members of the Council of Rectors and are the following:

- Doctoral education is an integral part of the process of training performed staff, which must be directed towards the needs of the national economy.
- Doctoral training is a form of learning priority through individual scientific research.
- Multidisciplinary preparation constitutes a basic concept of the postgraduate training. It must contain obligatory component parts to ensure the generic skills training – management, communication, training and subsequent career development.
- In order to provide coherent objectives needed to raise the responsibilities of the advisors of the doctoral thesis and to diversify forms of doctorate management.
- University and interuniversity Doctoral Schools should constitute today the basic trend in doctoral training – both in terms of ensuring quality of multidisciplinary doctorates studies and optimization considering the costs.
- The European Qualifications Framework (EQF FILE) is seen as one integral on the areas of training for all three cycles of higher education (L-M-D) with a gradual diversification with the advancement of the level of preparedness.
- Changing methods of selection and training of PhD advisors requires enhancing motivation for their work.
- Enhancing the accountability of parties involved in the studies of PhD – through the conclusion of the agreements concerned the tripartite (PhD student, advisor, university).

Thus, the organizational development of the institutional framework of the Doctoral School is a precondition for the implementation of higher doctoral studies of new format. The implementation of the Doctoral Schools should give a required additional code to increase the autonomy of the universities conducting doctoral programmes.

As the measures of adjustment is necessary to divide the doctoral programme in two distinct parts: scientific and general training evaluated with 60 credits (ECTS) and research, which is completed with the support of dissertation. Thus, it requires the preparation of plans and educational programs of studies, which provide training courses mandatory and optional, which can be quantified with a certain

number of credits and intended to provide general, transferable skills recognized in Europe. Other activities as the development of scientific articles, participation in the national and international conferences, the involvement in the teaching activity, organization of other educational and scientific activities must become parts of doctoral programmes, which may be assessed, also, with some credits.

Only so we could ensure the compatibility of the national educational process with that European, creating the conditions for doctoral students and teachers mobility, for recognition of the national educational descriptions on the European market. Implementation of such initiatives would provide the educational and the scientific system, both the national economy and the entire of the Republic of Moldova the following major advantages:

- mobilization of the national scientific potential, by stimulating the cycle III doctoral studies;
- aligning training process at the European requirements;
- enhancing the responsibility of the scientific staff towards the doctoral training;
- efficient cooperation with universities in Europe to prepare qualified personnel;
- access to European research programs through trained co-for doctoral students by the trustee;
- getting the legal framework for providing mobilities for doctoral students, teaching staff, scientific researchers.

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