

The Landscape of Doctoral Education in Europe

Melita Kovacevic

University of Zagreb

European HE Expert

Former EUA-CDE SC Chair

PRIDE Vice-Chair

Hungarian Accreditation Committee
MAB30 Jubilee Conference
Budapest, July 11, 2024



10 questions

1. Expertise in Dr Ed ?
2. A motivation for the field ?
3. A trigger for Dr Ed reform ?
4. Quality of the old Dr Ed ?
5. The last 20 years ?
6. Dr Ed in Europe and beyond today ?
7. The main features and components of Dr Ed ?
8. The landscape of Dr Ed in Europe ?
9. The reasons for the very different pace of changes across Europe ?
10. The new challenges facing universities and Dr Ed ?

What does expertise in doctoral education mean?

20 years of intense national and international work with doctoral education

Being a professor

Being a director of doctoral programme

Being a supervisor of doctoral students (national and international)

Being a head of research lab

Experience of Vice Rector for Research

Long term international involvement in doctoral education

(EUA CDE Former Chair, PRIDE Vice Chair)

Participation in developing policy paper, strategic documents, national and international recommendations

Number of courses on doctoral education

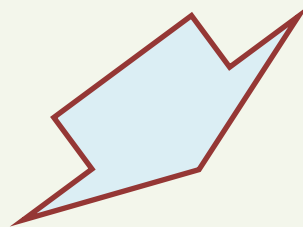
Consultancy, evaluation, projects in doctoral education

What does expertise in doctoral education mean?

Still many questions remain unanswered
& mistakes happen
and
so many similarities in so many different academic
environments

What could be a motivation for the field?

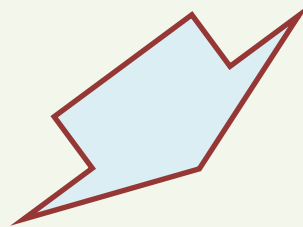
- Universities are changing
- Research gained on relevance
- Doctoral education is a core business of universities
- Doctoral education is focused on talents and future leaders
- Social context changed dramatically



**If doctoral education is of a good quality,
it is rewarding for everyone involved**

What was a trigger for doctoral education reform?

- Mass education and increased number of programmes & doctoral candidates
- Expansion of higher education institutions
- Need for a faster development
- More focus on interdisciplinarity and internationalisation
- Need to nurture and develop different skills, other than performing research itself
- Stronger ties with industry and other sectors



2005 – the first conference dedicated to Dr Ed & Salzburg Principles

Was the old doctoral education of less quality?

A paradox?

Majority of those who were proposing and implementing doctoral reform received their PhD degree within the 'old' system

Answer to the Q:

No!

BUT

**The context has completely changed!
Universities have changed!**

Doctoral education needs to be changed as well!

What has been done in the last 20 years of Dr Ed

A lot!

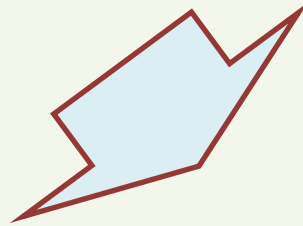
- Relevant documents, policies
- Established a framework for Dr Ed
- Establishment of doctoral schools
- Exchange of good practices
- Numerous networks, associations, working groups related to Dr Ed
- Numerous projects and funding schemes to support Dr Ed

Where are we today with doctoral education in Europe and beyond

- High level of convergence
- Institutional structures are developed
- Building research capacity is in the focus
- The nurturing of talent is a goal
- Creating space for dialogue

What are the main features and components of Dr Ed?

Relevance of research – training for research by doing research



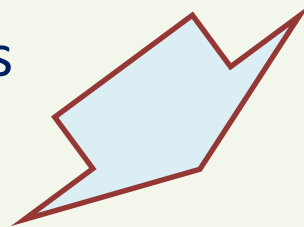
Selection and admission of doctoral candidates

Supervision / co-supervision

Planning the doctoral trajectory

Monitoring

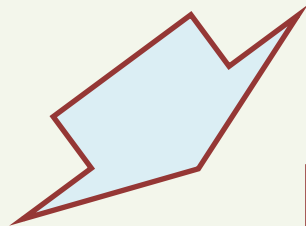
Doctoral thesis



**The result of good doctoral education
is not a good doctoral thesis
but a good new doctor**

What about the landscape of doctoral education in Europe?

- High level of diversity
- Different criteria for supervisors
- Understanding "structural programme"
- From no courses at all to too many courses
- Implementation of ECTS throughout the programme to no implementation
- From requiring generic/transferable skills to not requiring them at all



Across Europe Dr Ed of different quality and different stages of change

What are the reasons for the very different pace of change in different European countries?

Could we guess? Speculate?

- A stiff tradition?
- Resistance to change?
- Social closeness?
- A low level of internationalisation of HE system?

Some of the consequences:

- 
- **High brain drain**
 - **Lower attractiveness of Dr Ed**
 - **Lower interest of other sectors for PhD holders**

What are the challenges facing universities and Dr Ed

- Digitalisation
- Artificial intelligence, AI
- Mental health issues
- Completion rate

Still open questions

- How much we still have to do for **quality** of doctoral programmes/schools?
- How much **diversity** is **optimal**?
- What kind of **doctoral schools** are most **effective**? Do we know it?
- Do we produce too many or too little doctoral graduates?
- What **kind of governing/management** of doctoral schools will ensure **the most effective functioning** of all the stakeholders?
- Will **doctoral education change** in the future? Will it be **diversified**?

Thank you

Köszönöm



PRIDE
Network

ASSOCIATION FOR
PROFESSIONALS IN
DOCTORAL EDUCATION

**"Effective Communication
in Doctoral Education "**

<https://pride-network.eu/masterclass2024/>
<https://pride-network.eu/conference2025/>

melita.kovacevic@unizg.hr

