



European University Institute

Doctoral training in Europe: the European University Institute, Florence, Italy

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Summary

The paper gives an overview of the recent development of doctoral education in Europe. First by dealing with the effect of the generalised introduction of the Bologna declaration on postgraduate education. Secondly, it describes the European developments based on two strategic reviews of the European University Institute (EUI) during the last 15 years, in which it developed from a unique, almost monopolistic provider as a graduate university exclusively dedicated to doctoral training to a main competitor for the best doctoral candidates in the social sciences, shifting towards a major postdoc hosting institution.

1. Introduction

The European University Institute was created as an institution exclusively dedicated to doctoral education 30 years ago¹. It provides doctoral training in the social sciences, such as economics, history, law and social and political science. It is located in Florence, it has the legal structure of an inter-governmental organization funded by the European Union member states, currently 19. Extension with the remaining 6 EU member states is being negotiated so that there should soon be 25 Contracting States at the EUI.

The Institute's objective for 2006 is 600 doctoral research students, 100 postdocs and over 50 full-time professors supported by 150 administrative and technical staff, all working in various historical buildings on the hills of Fiesole just north of Florence, Italy.

To comply with the criteria defined by the conference organizer to develop on changes in the doctoral training over the last years, this paper will try to reflect these developments in the European University Institute which, due to its unique European character caters to all European countries. In order to structure the changes which mostly marked and are

¹ See short summary of the Institute's history in annex

relevant for the debate at the EUI I have taken two reference points, which were major strategic reviews that took place in the early 1990s and I refer mostly to the report then published called *Beyond Maintenance*². The second strategic review *Enlarging and Enhancing*³ took place around 2000, which dealt also the with European Union enlargement. But we will start with a general appreciation of the Bologna declaration and its effects on doctoral education.

2. The Bologna Declaration and European doctoral education

2.1. Objectives

The main objectives of the declaration of 1999 are as follows.

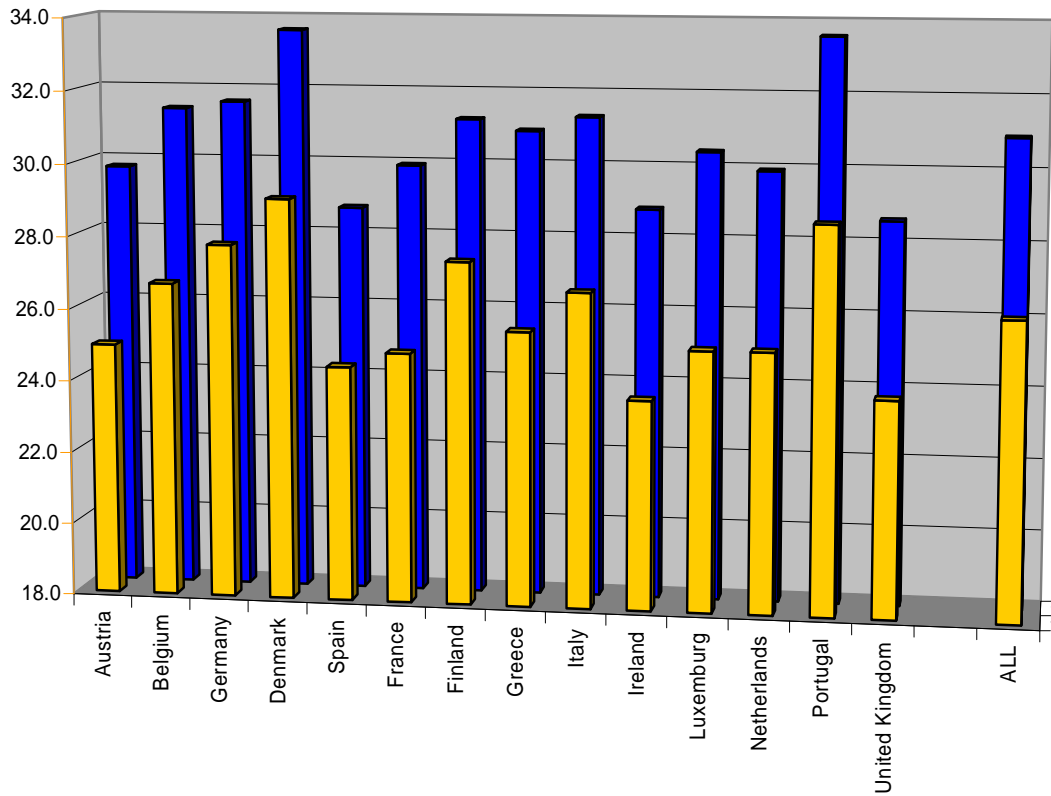
- Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees
- Adoption of a system essentially based on two cycles (under-graduate and graduate)
- Establishment of a system of credits
- Promotion of mobility
- Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance
- Promotion of the European dimension in higher education

The first objective is to reach, by 2010, a generally accepted uniform 3 + 2 + 3 year model including a credit transfer system in the entire European area. Today we see that a large number of countries have approached the issue by introducing the first 3-year structures, or a variation on that, for the first degree. It is generally recognized that one of the main motivations behind the objectives of the Bologna Declaration was to reduce the duration of the first post-secondary degree to a controllable number of years. In some European countries – especially in Germany and the Nordic countries – it took more than 5 years to obtain the first degree, whilst in the UK and Ireland it took only 3-4 years, in France/Belgium and the Netherlands 4-5 years. In some other European countries, the length of time of the first degree was almost uncontrollable, as in the case of Italy. The EUI is particularly well placed to compare the different outcome of the system, one has only to observe the age at which various nationalities start their doctoral work at the EUI.

² "A strategic plan for the European University Institute" November 1991, IUE 340/91 (CS 15)

³ "The future EUI", November 2001, IUE 271/01 (CS 6)

	Start	Submis	TTD*
Austria	25.0	29.7	4.4
Belgium	26.7	31.4	4.5
Germany	27.8	31.6	3.7
Denmark	29.1	33.6	4.5
Spain	24.5	28.7	3.8
France	24.9	29.9	4.3
Finland	27.5	31.2	4.5
Greece	25.6	30.9	4.0
Italy	26.7	31.3	4.3
Ireland	23.8	28.8	3.7
Luxemburg	25.2	30.4	5.2
Netherlands	25.2	29.9	4.1
Portugal	28.7	33.6	4.9
United Kingdom	24.0	28.6	4.2
ALL	26.2	30.9	4.1



The second objective was to combat the very high drop-out rate in some systems. In the beginning of 2000, two-thirds of students in Italy did not reach the first degree. Since this paper deals with the doctoral aspect, it needs to be observed that the doctoral discussion in the Bologna Declaration entered the debate only at a very late stage. It was really only by 2005 when the first declaration, at the instigation of the European University Association, stated how the doctoral component of the Bologna Declaration should be interpreted. Very little has been done in most countries, and the structures in most European countries still stick to the original models as they existed before the Bologna Declaration.

2.2. Structure and components: the Masters Degree

The 3 + 2 + 3 model in a number of countries was called the BAMA (BA/MA model, Bachelor's and Master's). Also the fact that the doctoral part was only 3 years shows that there was no clear idea how long it took in most European countries to finish a thesis. Although the ideas about the first degree and the doctoral degree have now crystallized, very little is known in the debate about the MA degree: each country has its own interpretation and this is particularly true for the research masters. In our intake the majority of the Masters are one year degrees. Furthermore, in some countries such as the UK the postgraduate market is extremely lucrative as one-year year taught MAs. Last but not least, let us not forget that in some countries the doctoral component is hardly more than 5-10% of PGE. After having reduced the length of the first degree, the major ongoing discussion remains: what are the components of the masters and how does it link to the doctorate and whether there might be a selection between these phases of the 3+2+3 model.

2.3. The Bologna Doctorate/PhD

It is striking that the Bologna Declaration stipulates 3 years for the doctoral programme. This must be the result of sheer ignorance. In reality doctoral studies, like in the US, take much longer in Europe. Hardly any statistical evidence is available to underpin this 3-year proposal. Countries that made the effort to collect data about the length of doctoral education (such as the UK, the Netherlands, Belgium and Sweden) have accepted from the statistical facts that it is not realistic to believe that a doctorate can be done in less than 4 years, indeed it is remarkable to observe that those national studies that *do* exist clearly showed that completion rates were very low and times-to-degree were very long. It is not accidental that the Swedish report is called "Four year, not for years"!

2.4. Globalization

To further enter into the specific question of the conference organizers, the Bologna Declaration indeed has a globalizing effect. It is widely recognized that the Bologna model is emulating the Anglo-Saxon approach to university education.

Does this globalization have a national flavour? Yes, it needs to be added here that a number of countries, whilst having signed the Bologna Declaration, still tend to give it an interpretation of their own. For example, in the Netherlands the first degree as allows for 4-5 years (3+2) and the doctorate in four years (3+1). For example, in Belgium the first degree now is 4 years, it will become 3+1. One of the remaining major issues is to what extent universities are allowed to introduce a selection after the first degree at the entrance into the second and third part of university education.

3. The changing doctoral landscape

During the nineties further changes took place at an increasing speed that can be characterized by five distinctive aspects:

1. Growth
2. Diversification
3. Substitution
4. Professionalization
5. Competition

3.1. Growth

Although in the seventies the literature in the United States predicted a decline in postgraduate education – also in Europe based on demographic assumptions – a considerable growth took place in both the United States and in Europe. In the U.S the number of doctorates went from 33000 per year to over 45000. In Europe some countries had a more than tenfold development in the wider postgraduate educational sector now producing 70.000 PhDs per year.

3.2. Diversification

In reality the postgraduate education sector grew much more if one looks beyond the doctoral education sector. Where doctoral education was the core activity in the postgraduate education market 25 years ago, today it only represents 10% of the market. So if one extrapolates the real growth in doctoral education representing only 10% of the market one can get an idea of the explosion of postgraduate activities in the U.S. and in Europe. This development is mainly caused by the exponential creation of new degrees for a non-academic market.

3.3. Substitution effect

As mentioned earlier, by introducing the Bologna model governments have tried to limit the time spent on the first degree, but obviously this will result in a large spill-over in a newly created postgraduate education sector which was formerly covered by traditional longer first degree education. This substitution effect will lead to an increased demand for mid-level postgraduate education training of a professional or academic character, as mentioned under section 3.2.

3.4. Professionalization

Doctoral education in the past was very much a type of “in-house” training and a start in a career for a professorial job, particularly in the social sciences and humanities. Most of those who started an academic career 25 years ago were appointed in assistant, or assistant professor jobs that made them a university employee. On average in the first 6-10 years one dedicated part of one’s time working under the wings of a supervisor but at the same time started to teach, to organize practica and to carry out some research alongside the normal doctoral work. There were no or very few structured courses or structured training programmes. After the first ten years generally a doctorate was delivered that provided the requisites for the first appointment as assistant/associate professor.

In the mid-eighties this tradition was abolished in a number of European countries and a number of appropriate structures for doctoral education, following the American model of the graduate schools in various formats (*Ecole Doctorale*, Graduate School, *Graduierntenkolleg*, *Onderzoekscholen*) were created. In some countries the legal position of the doctorandus changed fundamentally, from a normal university employee position one became a grant holder.

3.5. Competition

Dramatic changes in the labour market in the late nineties resulted in decreasing interest for doctoral training positions, especially in areas such as economics. Universities are in competition with each other for the best graduate students, resulting in concrete measures taken by the LSE, with its policy to stimulate the undergraduates to continue at the LSE, “Warwick offers cash bonus to keep graduates at the University” headline in the THES and the Max Planck Society offers special grants to attract foreign students to come to Germany, etc. The US still attracts several thousand doctoral students per year. Other countries such as the Netherlands provide additional funds related to PhD numbers and also provide attractive 4-year grants.

4. The European University Institute 1990-2005

After 15 years of existence the EUI had reached the following situation as summarised by the report: 40 full-time professors, 300 doctoral/research students and 40 postdoc fellows. The committee set up by the High Council (Board of Governors) stated that: ... *the changes in the Institute's environment in terms of higher education systems of member States and the upheavals in Eastern Europe offer an occasion to ask what the Institute's future should look like over the coming decades.* Highlighting the major issues from the above mentioned reports will provide insight in this changing European landscape. It must be added that a pilot role was also being played by the ESRC in the UK which was obliged, under pressure of the government, to review their postgraduate training practices.

5. The first strategic review 1992: Beyond Maintenance

The major problems which were observed by the early 1990s review group can be summarized as follows. Completion rates were too low, time-to-degree was too long, there was an insufficiently clear profile/character of the European University Institute, and the governance structure of the Institute was no longer suitable since its establishment in 1976.

5.1. The profile

This issue might be more relevant to the EUI than to other graduate schools, but nevertheless in this case it had to do with the typically European debate about subsidiarity: a European initiative should not double what is already ongoing in the various national universities. A distinct profile of the Institute, which for many meant a kind of European-ness, then became rather difficult to define. There was also a debate about whether there should be a policy component, dealing with issues related to the European agenda. A lot of resistance existed at that particular time within the Institute itself as regards policy research, but this was a more generic and widespread issue in academia at the end of the eighties in Europe. Policy research had a kind of negative stigma, it was considered to be linked too much to contract research money, also referred to as 'soft money', and Europe was not yet considered to be an academic topic of interest – for many wrong reasons, of course.

Rather than put emphasis on this debate, the Institute in an additional effort decided to create a special Centre, called the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, which would get its own professors and attract people who would work in the various disciplines at the Institute but would be more interested in policy issues. The development of the Centre became an immense success and with this the EUI built up its reputation as being active in the foremost areas of discussion in the European agenda. At the same time, the quality of the research carried out in the Robert Schuman Centre also made the whole issue whether it would be second rate disappear. Simultaneously there was a strong development of the profile of research carried out within the departments, which was of

direct relevance to the European agenda. A lot of comparative work was done both in the political and social science department and in the Law department, which actually developed over the years as the cradle of European law.

The relevance of a clear profile was immediately reflected in a redistribution of the applications to the different departments, those with a clear profile saw their share increasing significantly.

5.2. Time-to-degree and completion rates

The completion rates in the early nineties were only around 40% (up from 25% in the mid-eighties), but still considered too low by the review group. Also time-to-degree was too long. The review group therefore wanted to set the objective for the end of the decade at 75%, with a medium time-to-degree of 5 years. In order to achieve this, the structured first year was introduced, very much modelled on the first year in an American graduate school: a curriculum was developed with the necessary research skills and advanced training in the field, so that the young researcher acquired the proper tools for the future. Supervision was also considered a major issue and the spirit of the moment is best illustrated by the following phrase from the report, '*... the teaching should not only be done by excellent professors, but it should also be excellent*'.

As a result the EUI introduced a two-fold system of seminars/teaching and supervision assessment. Since its introduction this was a permanent topic of fierce debate. The main questions became the anonymity of the assessor and the low response rate and validation of the result. This debate continues and needs further reflection.

5.3. Governance

Because of the growth the decision-making body which until then had been the Academic Council had become too large and, meeting once a month, no longer responding to the management need of the Institute. It was decided to create an executive council, composed of the heads of department, the director of the Schuman Centre, the President, and the Secretary-General, who together would be responsible for the daily running of the Institute on a more frequent, fortnightly basis. This, combined with an increased responsibility of the heads of department, with a longer term appointment of up to 3 years, improved the decision-making process significantly.

5.4. Growth

Last but not least, in order to realize all objectives the Institute should have a real growth of its budget of roughly 25% for the next decade. This translated into a real budgetary growth of 2.3% each year. This was maintained for the first 7-8 years, until the Budget Committee stopped allowing any real growth at the end of the year under the pressure of complying with the Maastricht budgetary guidelines (deficits maximum 3% of the GDP) in

the Member States.

6. The second strategic review 2000: Enhancing and Enlarging – The Future EUI

Earlier than foreseen the Institute reached the main objective of the *Beyond Maintenance* report. The Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (RSCAS) developed to a very successful research centre of advanced studies, with a large postdoctoral component, and the TTD was reduced to 4.1 year with a completion rate of 76%. Due to a number of significant changes in the PGE landscape as mentioned above (see section 3.) the need was felt by the High Council for a new strategic plan and which served a major objective. The major objective (the first of the recommendations) was ... *to further develop its mission to be a top ranking doctoral programme and centre of excellence for European research*. Issues addressed in this review were caused by new developments such as the generalised introduction of doctoral schools, the Bologna declarations and the approaching accession of 10 new members to the European Union.

6.2. Recommendations made by the second report, Enhancing and Enlarging – The Future EUI (2001)

6.2.1. Time-to-degree

Although the objective of the *Beyond Maintenance* report had been reached (75% completion rate in 5 years) the report found that – the medium time to degree not being an average – it allowed people to exceed far beyond four years. Also, some people were leaving in the last year of study due to a lack of funding and therefore a solution had to be found to further increase the efficiency of the doctoral programme. The solution was fourth-year funding which should significantly speed up the completion of the thesis. Indeed, while the funding stopped after 3 years and only occasional 3-6 months grants were available for a limited number of people for writing up the thesis, a significant number of researchers were obliged to take up all kinds of small jobs of limited employment which in this crucial phase of writing the thesis is not an optimal solution. This was also recognized in England where the research councils fund a 1 + 3 scheme.

This proposal encountered very stiff opposition from some of the member states for reasons mentioned under 2.3 but was finally introduced in the academic year 2004-5.

6.2.3. Time limit

A further step was taken by introducing a maximum time to be spent on the PhD. After closely analyzing all data of completion at the EUI (we have a complete data set on all our research students from day-one) we realized that the attrition rate after 5 years

increases dramatically. Therefore a maximum time for defending the thesis of 5 years was introduced which is now operational at the EUI.

Not only employment reasons influence attrition, but also a declining interest in the subject, a decision to switch interest/supervisor contribute to significant unpredictable outcome.

6.2.4. Objectives and milestones: conditional funding of the 4th year

Deadlines are crucial ingredients in getting jobs done. In doctoral research a 4-5 year time horizon is fatal for most young researchers. Breaking down the whole process into a realistic set of short-term objectives contributes to increased completion. As a result, the structure of the four years was further fine-tuned in the sense that after each year, a clear objective in writing and in research was defined and only when those conditions were fulfilled, passage to the next year would follow.

For example, at the end of the first year a number of papers, written exams and a final "June-paper" allow an exam committee to decide on passage to second year. At the end of the 2nd year, one quarter of the thesis in research and writing needs to be accomplished. Finally, the funding of the fourth year is conditional on the progress at the end of the third year: 2/3rds of the thesis work, in writing (condition 1) plus the supervisor's statement that there is sufficient evidence that the thesis will be finished (in first draft) in a further 6 months. If, after 3 years + 6 months a first draft of the thesis is submitted, then the remaining 6 months are paid.

Furthermore, if the 36 months deadline for delivering 2/3rds is not met by the end of the 3rd year, no first instalment is paid at the start of the fourth year. So if someone finishes in 37 months, s/he loses the entire chance of receiving the first instalment of the fourth-year payment. On the other hand, if the person reaches the 36 month objective, which we consider a very important criterion and is paid the first instalment, but if the first draft is delayed up to the 42nd, 43rd or 44th month s/he might still get funding but it will be reduced by 1 month at the time in accordance with exceeding the time limit.

6.3. Enlargement

One of the major challenges the Institute was confronted with is the issue of enlargement. In May 2004 the EU was enlarged with 10 additional member states which meant that the Union's population increased by 350 to 475 million inhabitants. Estimates made by the Institute showed that this would lead to an increase of about 40% in students in the years to come. This immediately revealed a number of financial problems. Firstly, because the GDPs in the new member states are significantly lower than the current member states, in the range from 1:10 to 1:4. From the general negotiations with the member states it resulted that the maximum increase of contribution that the Institute would receive from

these member states was at that time only 4.6% while it should result in a 40% increase in the number of students – clearly a huge discrepancy would result.

The issue of the size and growth of the Institute came on the agenda. I will dedicate a separate section to this later on.

6.4. Postdoctoral training

It was clear that, with the changes in the European doctoral landscape, postdoctoral training had become more and more important, not only because of the fact that the doctoral training was much shorter compared to the seventies, but also the character of the training had moved away from the “master-disciple” model and young doctors did not have the same kind of experience as 20 years before. At the same time a fast development of the postdoctoral scene took place in the U.S. which grew far beyond 50,000 positions according to some estimates. Europe was nowhere near, and as a result, a huge flux of excellent young academics went to the U.S. In order to reverse that trend and keep some of the good people and offer alternatives in Europe and attract good non-European scholars, the Institute decided to set a new trend and increased its existing postdoctoral programme to approximately 100 postdocs.

6.5. Size matters

Confronted with the issue how many researchers from the new member states the EUI should host the issue of growth/size came on the agenda. The various components of the Institute were consulted and there was a clear reaction from the researcher body at the Institute who stated: don't grow too big because we are afraid of losing the special atmosphere that exist in the various departments. In order to analyze what would be a possible optimal size in a department and in graduate schools we analyzed the available statistics, discovering an interesting phenomenon in the NSF data published 1996. According to these data there is an optimal size for a graduate school. In other words, there is a convergence about the number of people in graduates schools, as the table below shows.

Observing the size of top graduate schools in the U.S., it became clear that they converged to 150. Based on this evidence, the EUI then decided that its total size should be limited to 600, with about 150 students in each of the departments.

Concentrating the minds: Quality (ranking) and Size(number of students)

Quarter	Econ	Soc	Pol	Hist	Biochem	Phys	Math	Chem
1	112	80	112	151	84	150	93	180
2	68	65	68	67	45	74	51	88
3	48	43	47	56	28	51	37	53
4	48	31	47	30	18	27	22	31
mean	70	55	69	76	44	75	50	88
corr.	-0,91	-0,99	-0,91	-0,92	-0,96	-0,95	-0,96	-0,95

Political Science		Sociology		History	
	students		students		students
Harvard	172	Chicago	155	Yale	188
UCLA	143	Madison-Wisco	221	UCLA	206
Yale	69	Berkeley	109	Princeton	68
Michigan	173	Michigan	163	Harvard	146
Stanford	89	UCLA	139	Columbia	334

source: "Research Doctorate Programs in the United States, Continuity and Change", NRC, Washington D.C. 1995.

6.5. Programme efficiency

How was the Institute going to deal with this increase, if there were already over 500 students at that time, taking into account all the years of study? As mentioned earlier, there were two ways for approaching the problem. First of all, the introduction of the fourth-year grant and conditional funding should significantly increase the programme's efficiency. Indeed following the reasoning of Bowen and Rudenstine⁴ as to student year

$$SYC = \frac{\sum \text{Student Years Invested}}{\text{Number of PhDs Earned}}$$

cost, we wished to reduce the number of years invested in each doctorate, which is even used in the allocations of funding to the various departments. As a result two years ago, a component of output funding was introduced in order to stimulate the departments to further promote their students finishing within the foreseen limit of 4 years. At that particular moment there was a large number of 6th, 7th and sometimes even 8th-year

⁴ "In pursuit of the PhD", Bowen and Rudenstine, Princeton University Press, 1992. p.163

students who were still using the infrastructure up to their defence date. Using the carrot of the 4th year grant to stimulate the fast completion within 4 years, and secondly as a stick there the 5-year limit was introduced. These two elements are expected to sufficiently reduce the number of students participating in the programme to free up positions for additional students from the new member states.

6.6. Introduction of a code of Supervision and the Dean of Studies

To complete the existing doctoral regulations a code of conduct for supervision was introduced. Furthermore to look after all the above points a Dean of Studies was appointed, a most important element in the assurance that rules of the doctoral programme are indeed implemented and observed.

Conclusions

- i** Doctoral education in Europe has gone through significant growth during the last decades. The number of doctorates produced each year has doubled to reach approximately 70,000.
- ii** This growth has been accompanied by very different structural developments, depending on which country one looks at. In some countries, like the UK and partially the Netherlands and in some cases France and Germany, doctoral or graduate schools have developed in a structured way, also improving the quality and the efficiency of doctoral education. In other countries, the increase in numbers has unfortunately not been paralleled by improvements in the structure of doctoral education.
- iii** Significant improvement could be made by making doctoral education far more student-oriented and user-friendly and break with the old tradition where doctoral education was the master-pupil relation (such as still found in Germany, Doktervater relation) which is genuinely recognized to be a sub-optimal solution for large-scale doctoral education. A European illness?
- iv** Governance structures within universities and lack of political will do not contribute in trying to create the kind of graduate schools and doctoral programmes with sufficient critical mass so as to obtain the kind of synergy that can result in very high-quality research training as seen in some of the top schools in the United States.
- v** In view of the Barcelona objectives and the Lisbon agenda, it is desirable that European universities address their governance issues and approach the implementation in the last phase of the Bologna agenda in such a way that Europe can become competitive and get rid of all prejudices as regards elitist training or selection procedures in order to concentrate the best candidates in good doctoral programmes. It is sad to observe that the majority of universities in Europe do not have the possibility of selecting their student intake while on the other hand this is possible for training in conservatories and hotel schools.

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Genesis and creation of the EUI of Florence

(extract from Jean-Marie PALAYRET, "A great school in the Service of a great Idea". The Creation and development of the European university Institute in Florence, in *EUI Review*, Summer 1997 pp.1-3)

The idea of a European Institution, complementing the construction of Europe in the field of higher education, appeared early on in the philosophies of the "founding fathers". It was already put forward in the programmes of the pro-European movements Congress of the Hague (May 1948) and during the European Cultural Conference (December 1949). The project however only took shape at governmental level on the occasion of the "relaunch" of Europe initiated by the Messina Conference (1955). Walter Hallstein, German Secretary of State for External Affairs, was then the promoter of a full-scale European University, to be inserted in the future Euratom treaty. In his initial conception, the University was to offer a training centre for nuclear sciences and was to be a direct emanation of the Community. Conceived as a fundamental instrument of integration, it would educate the elite of the up and coming generations in a spirit remote from nationalist views.

However, in spite of determined action on the part of the Italian government (G. Martino, A. Fanfani) and by the interim committee set up by the European Commission (chaired by Etienne Hirsch) as well as the support given by the European Parliament, all attempts to realise the European university failed, due mainly to its rejection by General de Gaulle and to the drastic opposition of national academic circles.

Stubborn defender of the idea of "Europe des Patries", the French government wished to avoid a university institution under Community law and was anxious to preserve State prerogatives in the sphere of awarding degrees. Along the lines of the project drawn up by Gaston Berger (Director General for Higher Education), Paris preferred to concentrate on co-operation among existing Member states national universities and on special recognition for their "European vocation". In particular, Charles de Gaulle launched the Fouchet Plan, which had an important cultural facet. It was the occasion for the French Head of State to re-examine the question (Pescatore Commission) outside the framework of Euratom and in connection with cultural co-operation among the Six.

The reluctance of academics was the second obstacle to the European university project. The fear of German, Italian and Belgian universities was that the European University would lack adequate cultural roots to grow, attract the best students and drain public funds.

It was therefore in an inter-governmental framework that the Heads of State and of government met in Bonn on 18 July 1961, then -after an interruption due to the "empty chair crisis" and a second relaunch, motivated by the university crisis in 1968 at the Hague on the 1st and 2nd December 1969, brought the project under study again, recording their resolve to consecrate through a solemn commitment their participation in funding a "European University Institute in Florence". The two conferences which followed in 1970-71 in Florence and Rome, on the initiative of the Italian government, led to a project that both in size and content was more modest than the initial ambitions, as it would no longer have an institutional place within the Communities and the Institute to be created would only be reserved for post-graduate studies. The first attempts to tackle the education issue inside the European Commission oriented the difficult negotiations that followed and led to the signing by the Six in 1972 of a Convention creating a "European University Institute" on which the Ministers for Education had marked their agreement in principle during their first meeting within the Council

of the Communities in November 1971. The three New Member States (United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark) had in the meantime applied to join the Institute and participated in the work of the preparatory Committee set up to put in place the administration, the staff and a profile definition to be conferred on the Institute. The Institute eventually opened its doors in November 1976 to its first 70 research students.

The European University Institute was created by the Member States of the founding European Communities and started its activities in 1976. Now, 30 years later, it is one of the largest doctoral programmes in the social sciences in the world. Its alumni are in academic posts all over Europe and occupy leading professional positions internationally.

After the recent enlargement process of the European Union, new members States are acceding to the European University Institute in an ongoing process.

The high quality of the research and teaching programmes follows from the recruitment of the best scholars from Europe and abroad. The extensive visitors programmes bring leading scholars and policy-makers to Florence to participate in numerous conferences, symposia and workshops, open to all members of the Institute. For research students this provides excellent opportunities to access international networks in their disciplines.

Over 30 years of experience with the doctoral programme has resulted in a unique, structured approach with the objective of completing an internationally approved thesis within four years. More than 800 professors, fellows and research students recruited from more than 30 nations work together in beautiful historical buildings on the hills between Florence and Fiesole, offering a unique multi-cultural and comparative environment. 'A province of the mind', as the former Principal Patrick Masterson likes to call it.

The European character results from a representative research student population from all the Member States. About 10% of the researchers comes from outside the European Union, such as the Americas, Australasia, and Central and Eastern Europe.

The Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies concentrates on policy research and provides a platform for the discussion of issues on the European agenda. Inter-disciplinary research interacts with decision- and policy-makers resulting in new orientations and solutions.

The success of the doctoral programme is best illustrated by the following indications. The overall completion rate has now reached 75% across disciplines. The time-to-degree has dropped to a 4.1 year median.

The quality of our doctorate is best reflected by our new doctors' success on the labour market. An increasing share, more than 70%, find employment in the academic sector (up to 82% in Social and Political Sciences). Also outside this area the Institute's doctors find excellent employment opportunities in international organizations such as the European Central Bank, EIB, OECD, World Bank and IMP, as well as in various domains of national and international public service and the private sector. A special effort is being made through the alumni network to offer opportunities for teaching and professional training experience for advanced researchers.