

## **WG Conclusions**

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### **Enhancing of Supervision: Professional Development and Assessment of Supervisors**

London, 8-9 January 2009

## Starting Points

- Doctoral education in Europe is in the stage of a « mini revolution ».
- Supervision has to reflect changing circumstances and conditions of doctoral education:
  - ✓ global competitiveness
  - ✓ political pressure (Bologna and Lisbon)
  - ✓ 3-4 years time frame for completion
  - ✓ limited funding (often based on number of completed PhDs)
  - ✓ increased number of doctoral candidates
  - ✓ changing nature of the students body (diversity - more international students from different cultures, but often no international staff; more demanding students)
  - ✓ tougher evaluation criteria (push on more publications, more students, more citations, more transparency, etc.)

## **Session 1: Professional development of supervisors**

- Supervision = a collective effort with clearly divided responsibilities of the supervisor, doctoral school/programme, research group and the institution (and the doctoral candidate)
- Professional development of supervisors/ training may have different formats and different names depending on the academic culture (courses, workshops, conferences, interactive debates and « moderated collegial discussions » with facilitators; etc.)
- Sharing experience of senior supervisors with younger colleagues is rewarding for both (win-win situation)
- It is easier to organise « training » of supervisors within a structured framework such as a doctoral school (this structure can offer more opportunities - different courses, workshops etc. for doctoral candidates)

## Session 1: Professional development of supervisors (cont.)

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- One of the aims of « training » of supervisors: to raise awareness among supervisors that they do not need to know or do everything; and can delegate (share supervision with other experts, send candidates to other services, courses, counsellors, mentors) = multiple supervision/ co-supervision is encouraged although 1 to 1 (old) style supervision remains important
- Guides or handbooks for supervisors – a very useful tool: CDE should collect examples and make them available for members
- Professional development of supervisors should be linked to institutional strategies (supervisors have to be informed about the institutional rules, guidelines and trends)
- Is supervision part of education or research (duties)?

## Session 2: Assessment of supervision

- Point of departure: academia is a conservative place, sticks and carrots are needed...
- Incentives:
  - ✓ Promotion
  - ✓ Financial incentives (usually not individualised)
  - ✓ Awards for best supervisors and co-supervision nominated by candidates
  - ✓ Less teaching load or sabbatical in case of successful completion
- Monitoring of some kind done in some countries (mainly in the North)
- What for?
  - ✓ Carrots and sticks are for donkeys – and they need to know where they are going – institutional strategies
  - ✓ Quality is hard to measure
  - ✓ Comparable data on supervision, completion rates etc. very different across Europe
  - ✓ **Prevention of failure**

## Supervision culture

- Away from the carrot and stick-mentality
- Towards the creation of a **supervision culture**
- Supervision should be recognised as part of career development
- Provide supervisors with skills that they need rather than incentives
  - ✓ Bottom up perspective, meet them where they are
  - ✓ Communication as key part of the supervision culture
- Dialogue
  - ✓ Between supervisors within the institution
  - ✓ Involving doctoral candidates in a structured manner

## Session 3. Disciplinary Differences

- Lack of data to support our stereotypes of the disciplines
- Different levels of dependence and independence of the doctoral candidate
  - ✓ Mixed role of supervisor and employer (found in the labs of the hard sciences)
- Differences in time to degree (TTD)
- Differences in mobility
- Differences in contacts (meetings) with supervisors
- Good practices to overcome disciplinary differences:
  - ✓ Interdisciplinary colloquia
  - ✓ Common language
  - ✓ Presenting results in front of interdisciplinary audience

## Concluding remarks

- Importance of supervision as key part of quality in doctoral education
  - ✓ Importance for institutional strategies on different levels (faculties and departments)
  - ✓ What should the supervisor feel responsible for? Defining tasks and structures
  
- Importance of quality in supervision
  - ✓ Difficulties of measurement
  - ✓ Involvement of doctoral candidates