

## **ERA Consultation Contribution (2): Recognising PhDs as Professionals**

On 13 September 2011, the European Research Area Committee (ERAC) held a stakeholder seminar to formally launch the public consultation on the European Research Area (ERA) [LINK 1]. Eurodoc is deeply committed to the ongoing and especially the current pan-European efforts to complete the ERA by 2014. In this second contribution from Eurodoc to the ERA consultation, we address the question: Why and how will recognising PhDs as professionals enable the completion of ERA?

An attractive research career starts with recognition. For most researchers, this recognition comes when they obtain full-time permanent research posts. Yet the scarcity of such positions, particularly in academia, hampers this development and contributes to the impression that a scientific career is unattractive. Eurodoc has always emphasised that recognition of the profession should start at the very beginning: at the PhD stage.

Recognising doctoral candidates as employees stimulates the research working environment. Senior researchers would benefit from the fresh perspectives of their junior colleagues, and PhDs would be encouraged to explore beyond the current scientific frontiers. By categorising doctoral candidates as 'students' merely restricts their capacity to fully contribute to scientific research; it is actually a great barrier to retaining – and attracting future – researchers because many are unable to see themselves as young scientists in either academia or industry.

Ensuring that doctoral candidates find their research environment rewarding is essential to achieving the EU's target of one million researchers by 2020. Eurodoc urges all European institutions, working together with stakeholders, to promote the full recognition of doctoral candidates as professionals who have taken the first step in a scientific career path and become contributors to the scientific community.

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This contribution was written in October 2011 by the career development working group. Please contact the working group coordinator for any questions or further information at [career-development@council.eurodoc.net](mailto:career-development@council.eurodoc.net).

### **References**

LINK 1: <http://scic.ec.europa.eu/str/index.php?sessionno=2417dc8af8570f274e6775d4d60496da>