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Meet the Eurodoc board

The current Eurodoc board, elected on March 28th and 29th, consists of John Peacock (President - Belgium), Filomena Parada (Vice-president - Portugal), Anna Tschaut (Secretary - Germany), Fabian Faller (Treasurer - Luxembourg), and Kristina Ferkovic (Croatia), Margaux Kersschot (Belgium) and Wolfgang Muller (Austria) as General Board Members.

More information can be found on [our website](#).

Editor's note

Dear Readers,

We're pleased to present you with a new Eurodoc newsletter.

In this newsletter you can find out more about some ongoing campaigns to promote the value of scientific work in Europe. We have also included an introduction to SuperProfDoc, a new Erasmus+ funded project in which Eurodoc is a partner, and a report from a conference organised by the Student Chamber in the Czech Republic.

Eurodoc members have also been active the past months attending a number of events, and reports from some of these have been included.

In other news, the server hosting Eurodoc's website and mailing lists suffered a major failure in October. We are working to restore normal service as soon as possible, and apologise for any inconvenience caused.

As always we welcome your comments and suggestions on this newsletter. Do not hesitate to [contact us](#)!

The Editorial Team

Eurodoc Annual Conference, 27th – 28th April 2015

Empowering Young Researchers in Europe: Engagement and Participation

Preparations for Eurodoc's next conference in Cluj-Napoca are going well. The theme 'Empowering Young Researchers in Europe: Engagement and Participation' has been well received by Eurodoc's members and partner organisations, with many already expressing their desire to speak at the event.

The conference should prove a good opportunity to learn what the most pressing issues for young researchers are. It will be an opportunity for organisations to share information, find synergies, and hopefully start new projects together.



The Old Casino in Cluj

The conference is being organised by Eurodoc and RoDoc and is due to take place on the **27th and the 28th April 2015**. For more information, or if you are interested in sponsoring this event, please contact us as soon as possible!

Eurodoc Statement in Support of ABIC Campaign



Eurodoc's Portuguese member [ABIC \(The Portuguese Association of Grant-holding Researchers\)](#) has been organising a number of initiatives aimed at improving the research environment in Portugal. Recent years have seen drastic funding cuts which has put many of the country's research centres at risk. Researchers

themselves are struggling in the system, with many (particularly younger researchers) having to leave the country for any hope of continuing a research career.

ABIC worries that the Portuguese government seems to have no long term strategy for research, and that the lack of interest from politicians will only serve to weaken the country's already frail research infrastructure.

The campaign aims to promote the value of science for Portuguese society and to highlight the important work done by the country's scientific workers. Among the initiatives is an open letter '[In defence of Science in Portugal](#)'. Eurodoc is supporting its member's campaign and is encouraging researchers to sign the open letter. Eurodoc's statement can be read in full on our website.

European Young Researchers Platform

The European Young Researchers' Platform now [has a website!](#) The initiative, set up by Euroscience, aims to serve as a permanent platform for organisations representing early career researchers to exchange information, and work together to further the interests of young researchers.

In total, nine organisations, including Eurodoc, are participating in the initiative. The website will also act as a means to inform researchers and other interested individuals about the role of these different organisations. The landscape of European researchers associations can be confusing, and it's hoped the portal will help to clear up some misunderstandings, and direct people to the appropriate organisation for their needs.

The group hopes to meet in person once a year, and Eurodoc encourages all participants to make use of our annual conference as a regular opportunity to meet.



Crisis Line

The national Grad Crisis-Line was set up in 1999 to provide doctoral candidates with free and confidential telephone counselling. Trained staff who understand the needs of young researchers are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year.

You can SKYPE the Crisis-Line at 800-472-3457.



They have chosen ignorance

Many researchers are becoming increasingly unhappy with the direction research policy is taking across Europe. A number have gotten together to prepare an [open letter 'they have chosen ignorance'](#), which aims to draw public attention to the issues and to highlight for policy makers the dissatisfaction felt by many researchers. According to the letter's authors, policy makers have 'completely lost touch with the reality of research'.

The open letter invites interested persons across Europe to sign it. At the time of writing, just over 16,000 people and around 30 organisations had done so.

The open letter is being hosted by Euroscience (who have also endorsed the letter), and their webzine, the Euroscientist, is hosting a blog titled: [Homo Scientificus Europaeus](#). The blog is intended to work as a platform for researchers to speak of their concerns, and is intended to serve as a platform through which different opinions can be gathered. From this the organisers hope to be able to devise solutions to the problems facing Europe's research system.

All researchers are invited to visit and contribute to the blog.

SuperProfDoc

Professional doctorates, industrial doctorates, practice based doctorates, modern doctorates. Whatever you wish to call them, there is a huge range of non-traditional doctorates available to people who don't want to pursue the traditional PhD.

A new Erasmus+ funded project aims to examine these modern doctorates and identify good practice in order to improve the support and supervision for such degrees, and enhance overall quality. The project is being led by the [University of Middlesex](#), which was one of the earliest universities to offer these types of doctorate. The other partners in the project include the [Maastricht School of Management](#), [ADAPT](#), [Trinity College Dublin](#), and of course Eurodoc!



Participants at the SuperProfDoc kick off meeting at Middlesex University

The kick off meeting for the project was held on 22nd and the 23rd October. The meeting sought to identify the structure of the project and the desired outcomes.

These modern doctorates present us with many different challenges from the 'traditional' doctorate. For a start, the target audience is generally different, as are the reasons individuals have for choosing to pursue a doctorate. The person pursuing a DProf or a DBA, for example, is often already well established in their career. The doctorate might then be seen as a means to confirm and enhance an individual's expertise and achievements.

Naturally this can mean that those pursuing these doctorates can have many different needs and wants from the person working on a more 'traditional' PhD. It is hoped that this project will produce a set of guidelines

The project aims to survey both supervisors and supervisees, to find out more about their experiences from professional doctorates and what they desire to achieve with them. Thus if you are in any way involved with one of these doctorates, [please get in touch with us](#).

News from Members: Czech Academic Senators Conference

The Student Chamber of the Council of Higher Education Institutions ([SKRVŠ](#)) is the legally based representative body of all university students in Czech Republic. The most important annual event the Chamber organises is the Academic Senators' Conference (KAS). Its main purpose is to bring the senators from the highest possible number of universities together, to get them in a closer communication with the Chamber and to discuss a specific topic. This year the conference was held in Ceske Budejovice at a local university from October 16th till October 18th 2014. The topic chosen was the role of higher education in society. This was the 3rd year of the event (KAS 3.0), and this years can be considered as the most important so far in terms of its duration, programme richness and number of participants; we had 52 student participants, 11 guests (including three from abroad) and 22 universities represented. The programme was divided into three parts: plenary contributions, workshops and international guests' contributions.



Panel discussion at the Academic Senators Conference

In the plenary session, we dealt with the amendment of the university law. The third consecutive minister of education is trying to push through some substantial changes in the operation of universities; this time we are speaking about e.g. restrictions of faculty rights, the possibility of university degree revocation, and a new system of quality assurance. The Chamber is deeply involved in the negotiations and has to fight hard against changes disadvantaging the position of students. The panel discussion was closely related to the conference topic, with five panellists invited to propose their ideal, sometimes utopian higher education concept. The rector of a local university, the chairman of the Council of Higher Education Institutions, representatives of the Accreditation Committee, the former Minister of Education and educational consultant all accepted the invitation to speak on the panel. A general idea was that quality should be increased; whereas one specific idea was that this could be reached by lowering the number of students.

In parallel, several workshops, organised by the Chamber, were offered to participants. The topics were: student awarding by the Chamber for extraordinary merit, motivation to be an academic senator, international activities of the Chamber, and support of Ph.D. candidates. The latter was organised by the working group for Ph.D. studies. According to the results of a recent official (ministerial) survey, which was presented at the workshop, contemporary Ph.D. topics seem to be: the financial support (the scholarships are extremely low and don't cover the cost of living) and other duties that prevent students from elaborating the dissertation in standard duration, which is 3 or 4 years. Obligatory health insurance is another topic. All students older than 26 years have to pay this insurance themselves if they are not employed at the same time (normally Ph.D. candidates don't have a contract of employment with the university). Regarding the low scholarships, this is an unfair load applied particularly to Ph.D. candidates.

In the international session we had contributions from our colleagues from Slovakia and the European Students' Union.

František Moulis

OpenCon 2014

[OpenCon 2014](#), the student and early stage researcher conference on Open Access (OA), Open Education (OE), and Open Data (OD), held on November 15-17, in Washington DC, joined more than 170 people from different countries and backgrounds.

Organised by the Right to Research Coalition, SPARC (The Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition), and an Organising Committee of students and early career researchers from around the world, was an opportunity to debate important topics about OA, OE and OD in different realities and the work developed in these areas.

During the three days of the event the participants had the opportunity to participate in different keynote sessions and workshops. In the last day the organisation has provided advocacy training sessions to be applied in the advocacy meetings with different key agents.

Opencon 2014 was a great opportunity to put together the arguments that support the idea about how important OA can be for society. OA has the power to help general society be aware of the work done by researchers. Open Access workgroup coordinator Slobodan Radicev concluded that 'OpenCon 2014 is currently the world's best conference about OA, OD & OED for young researchers. I never saw so many energetic and motivated young people who work on OA in the same place.'

It is possible to follow the post conference discussion in the Twitter [list](#) created with participants and organisers of OpenCon 2014.

Ivo Neto

Empowering Researchers. ENGRES 2014

The Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions (MSCA) 2014 conference took place on the 18th and 19th November. The conference, on the theme 'Empowering the Next Generation of Researchers' was hosted by Trento University, and organised by the Italian Ministry of Education, Research and Universities, and the Autonomous Province of Trento. The conference was organised as part of the Italian presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The conference discussed how we can empower researchers through their training and professional development, and turn them into successful researchers able to respond to the demands of the economy and society. Researchers today follow a diverse range of career paths, which presents some challenges when considering how to best equip them with the skills necessary to succeed. Much of the discussion centred around this issue, and examples of good practice such as within the Marie Curie actions, were presented alongside discussion of the structural changes necessary to meet researcher's needs.

Eurodoc was invited to speak in a workshop titled 'Attractive working and social security conditions in Europe for ANY talented researcher'. Eurodoc President John Peacock spoke about the current priorities of Eurodoc's members, which feature improved working conditions quite strongly. Issues such as low salaries/ grants, the lack of social security, the lack of clear contracts, as well as the instability and uncertainty in pursuing an academic career remain of pressing concern to many of Eurodoc's members.



Participants at OpenCon

Empowering Researchers. ENGRES 2014 cont'd

The conference also saw the awarding of the [2014 MSCA Awards!](#) The award for communicating science went to Shane Bergin for his campaign '[DARTofPhysics](#)' which encouraged commuters on the Dublin metro to discuss physics. The second prize for promising research talent went to Maanasa Raghavan from the centre for GeoGenetics at the University of Copenhagen, whose work has been shedding light on the peopling of the Americas. Lastly, the award for nurturing research talent went to Sarah Bohndiek for her work in promoting careers in science.



The conference ended by asking panellists how they would describe the empowered researcher of tomorrow. The empowered researcher, they suggested, was one with the ability to self determine the direction of their research, who was free to choose the where and the what of their work. The empowered researcher was one who knew their profession, and would go beyond mere self interest. It's hoped the conference provided us with some discussion on how society can create the conditions necessary for this researcher to flourish.

The final word of the conference went to Fulvio Esposito who asked to make the European Research area into a European Researchers Area.

InterDoc 2014: The Triple 'I' Approach to Doctoral Training

The historic Palazzo del Bo of the University of Padua recently played host to another Italian EU presidency conference: InterDoc 2014. The conference met to discuss various approaches to doctoral training under the themes of 'International, Intersectoral, and Interdisciplinary'. The conference was organised by the Italian Ministry of Education, Research and Universities, along with the University of Padua, and the University of Camerino.

The event was another opportunity to share examples of different models of doctoral training and the challenges these present. Similar to the MSCA conference in Trento, much emphasis was placed on how the interdisciplinary and international aspects of a doctoral training programme can work to widen career and research opportunities for researchers.

The conference was followed by the DOC2DOC symposium, in which examples of innovative doctoral programmes were explored from the doctoral candidates perspective. Eurodoc and its Italian member ADI opened this symposium with a discussion on researcher's mobility, before presentations were heard from doctoral candidates working on these innovative programmes.

When discussing the merits of different programmes, and the structural changes we might implement to improve them, it's easy to forget the experiences of the candidates themselves. The symposium complemented the conference well by ensuring the doctoral candidates were not forgotten.



The courtyard in the Palazzo Bo, University of Padua

About Eurodoc

Eurodoc was founded in Girona (Spain) on 02/02/02. Eurodoc is the **European Council of doctoral candidates and junior researchers**. It takes the form of a federation of national associations of doctoral candidates and young researchers.

Eurodoc's objectives are:

- To **represent doctoral candidates and junior researchers at the European level** in all matters of education, research, and professional development of their careers.
- To **advance the quality of doctoral programmes** and the standards of research activity in Europe.
- To **promote the circulation of information on issues regarding young researchers**, organise events, take part in debates, and assist in the elaboration of policies about higher education and research in Europe.
- To **establish and promote co-operation between national associations** representing doctoral candidates and junior researchers **within Europe**.

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Want to publish an article in Eurodoc's newsletter? Then get in [contact with us!](#)