

## Eurodoc application to the Bologna Follow-Up Group as consultative member

### BFUG Secretariat

Head of the BFUG Secretariat  
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Tirana, Albania

**Brussels, April 9th 2024**

**Dear Sir, Dear Madam**

With this letter the *European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers (Eurodoc)* wishes to apply for the status of consultative member in the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG). Please allow us to in the following to outline the stakeholder group we are representing, its relevance for the BFUG, and the added value that we would bring to the BFUG.

### Representativeness

Eurodoc represents doctoral candidates<sup>1</sup>, postdocs and other early career researchers across Europe. This means that Eurodoc represents specifically the individuals enrolled in third cycle education (doctoral candidates) as well as the individuals for whom third cycle education has been most relevant for their immediate career paths, namely postdocs and other early career researchers. Doctoral candidates, postdocs and other early career researchers make up a considerable proportion of researchers in academia and contribute to the core tasks of higher education, namely teaching, research, and outreach.

### Organisational form

Eurodoc, the European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers, is a federation of national associations representing doctoral candidates, postdocs, and early career researchers from countries across the EHEA. Eurodoc was founded in 2002 and then established in 2005 as a non-profit, international volunteer organisation based in Brussels.

Eurodoc is an organisation run by volunteers: The administration of Eurodoc, that is the board and the secretariat, is made up of doctoral candidates, postdocs, and early career researchers, who are elected by the national associations to represent them on the European level. Eurodoc's daily activity is based on participative democracy and our

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<sup>1</sup> By doctoral candidate we understand any individual enrolled in third cycle education.

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decision making aims to constructively build consensus and knowledge exchange among doctoral candidates, postdocs, and early career researchers across Europe.

### Relevance of the stakeholder group

With the increase in the number of doctoral candidates in Europe in the past decade<sup>2</sup> and the professionalisation of doctoral education, third cycle education has become an important arena where the higher education institutions' mission is shaped.

The Salzburg Principles define doctoral education as research education (European University Association 2005).<sup>3</sup> Thus, the doctorate in Europe – with some exceptions such as professional doctorates – centres on an individual research project with an original contribution to knowledge. This means that doctoral candidates' education differs significantly from Bachelor's and Master's education, while their conditions as researchers differ equally significantly from those of researchers with tenure or permanent positions, for example through their high dependence on one or more supervisors and their non-permanent academic employment or lack of employment. The specific situation of doctoral candidates can, therefore, neither be subsumed simply under the group of students nor under the group of senior researchers.

Furthermore, the structure of doctoral education – including admissions requirements, duration, or quality assurance – is not only still less standardised than for Bachelor's or Master's programmes, it is also often regulated separately from the first or second cycle. It not only varies greatly across Europe, but the regulation of doctoral education is also located at different levels – national, institutional (university, faculty, or departmental), or doctoral school.

For the stakeholder group that Eurodoc represents, doctoral education is one of the key focal points: either because as doctoral candidates they are enrolled in third cycle education, or third cycle education is directly relevant for their immediate next career steps either outside of academia, or within academia as postdocs and early career researchers. For this latter group, in turn, a recent report of the European University Association equally stressed the importance of ensuring the representation of postdoctoral researchers rather than simply subsuming them under faculty. Otherwise their specific conditions will remain invisible and risks that “their specific perspective is not sufficiently taken into account”.<sup>4</sup>

Doctoral education lays the groundwork for the future generations of senior researchers and teachers – doctoral candidates, postdocs, and other early career researchers will shape the higher education and research sector in the decades to come.

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<sup>2</sup> Eurostat 2024, OECD 2020:24.

<sup>3</sup> While Bachelor's and Master's students may contribute to the research at higher education institutions, they are not expected to contribute to the production of scientific knowledge with individual original research.

<sup>4</sup> Engels, T., Hasgall, A., and Peneoasu, A-M. (2024): *Postdoctoral Researchers at European Universities: Profiles, Roles and Institutional Support Structures*, European University Association.

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### Added value to the Bologna Process

Admitting Eurodoc as a consultative member in BFUG would serve to ensure the inclusion of a stakeholder who focuses specifically on third cycle education and who represents the distinct conditions of doctoral candidates, postdocs, and other early career researchers. Eurodoc's work focuses on policies for education and research at the European level to promote positive change in the higher education policies, culture, and environment that affect the quality of the education and conditions of doctoral candidates and early career researchers. In our work, we are committed to the goals outlined by the Bologna process and the fundamental values of the EHEA.

We thank you for taking the time to assess our application and remain at your disposal at all times to answer any questions or provide further information.

Sincerely,

Sebastian Dahle, President

### In the name of the administrative board on behalf of Eurodoc

Sebastian Dahle, President  
Pil Maria Saugmann, Vice-president  
Hannah Schoch, Secretary  
Devris Isler, Treasure  
Aleksandra Lewandowska, General Board Member  
Sara Pilia, General Board Member



**Contact:** Eurodoc President: [president@eurodoc.net](mailto:president@eurodoc.net)

**Eurodoc, the European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers**, is a grassroots federation of 24 national associations of early career researchers (ECRs) from 22 countries across Europe. Eurodoc was established in 2002 and is based in Brussels. As a representative of doctoral candidates and junior researchers at the European level, Eurodoc engages with all major stakeholders in research, higher education, and innovation in Europe.

