

Joiman EC Project - Task Force 4 “Development and administration of Joint Programmes at Doctoral Level“
The Joint European/International Doctorate on Social Representations and Communication:
an experience anticipating the Bologna process.

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Abstract

In this article we present a case study of an experience anticipating the Bologna Process, inspired by the assumption that the European joint doctorate is a strategic tool for enhancing the attractiveness of the European Higher Education and Research Areas. We briefly introduce its distinctive features, defined as a jointly established multilateral degree awarded by at least three universities in three different European countries on the basis of inter-institutional agreements. These agreements establish the criteria for planning, implementing and monitoring an international network-based doctoral programme.

The Joint European/International PhD on Social Representations and Communication is the first formally recognised European doctorate within the multiple institutional scenarios (European Commission: DG-Education and Culture and DG-Research; Ministries of Higher Education; Universities) established in 1993 under the Erasmus Inter-Universities Co-operation Programme. Since then, the original network of 13 European universities has grown to 22 universities, research institutes and enterprises in 15 countries around the world, opening the door to an increased transfer of knowledge, and expanding career opportunities for researchers.

The Joint European/International PhD on Social Representations and Communication, provides advanced research training in a key supra-disciplinary area of social sciences that deals with the social construction of knowledge, its relation to socially situated practices and to traditional as well as new means of human interaction and communication. It has been selected by DG Education and Culture as an example of "best practices" for dissemination in higher education and is the core of the EU approved SoReCom THEMatic NETwork, a worldwide "network of networks" of academic, professional research and commercial institutions interested in this area of social psychology.

We describe its innovative curriculum, which takes full advantage of modern communication technologies to build a worldwide virtual campus. Its well-tested didactic formula and training structure include: tutoring and co-tutoring triadic system (multiple supervision), annual International Summer School and three annual International Lab Meetings (winter, spring and summer sessions), face-to-face individual and small group mentoring activities integrated with an open learning system where tutors have on-line access for didactic activities and for monitoring trainees’ progress; structured individual and collective international mobility of trainees and teaching staff; and learning by doing in academic and non-academic settings.

The Joint European/International PhD on Social Representations and Communication guarantees: a) mutual recognition of the degree in addition to institutional recognition from the EC, universities, and ministries; b) joint governance model for promotion of the programme and dissemination, on-line unified server for application and registration, recruitment of applicants, fee policy and administrative management, common web platform and integrated infrastructure, training structure, international mobility, intellectual property rights, services policy, obligations and rights of both teaching staff and doctoral research trainees, assessment and quality assurance, awarding of degrees; c) training in research and transferable skills in an international environment; d) multiple supervision; e) training assessment; f) physical and virtual international mobility for research trainees and professors; g) intensive didactic stages in multilingual settings; h) expanded networking opportunities via the integrated SoReCom THEMatic NETwork; i) enhanced career prospects in and outside academic contexts.

1. THE EUROPEAN DOCTORATE: A STRATEGIC TOOL FOR ENHANCING THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH AREAS.

In a previous article [1], we presented two distinct models for the new forms of international co-operation in doctoral training, internationalisation and the International Doctorate, both products of the impulse given by the Bologna Process to the internationalisation of doctoral training to promote

synergic links between the European Research Area (ERA) and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). We also examined the main steps taken towards establishing the European Doctorate since 1959 until the European University Association's (EUA) creation of the Council for Doctoral Education (CDE-EUA) in 2008. Although such degrees have never legally been established under European law because of autonomy issues in EU member states, DG-Education and Culture with its Erasmus, Socrates and Life Long Learning (LLP) programmes have encouraged the development of new advanced joint curricula (CDA) and inter-university cooperation. DG-Research's various Framework Programmes (known by their acronyms: HCM for Human Mobility Capital in the 4th FP; T.M.R. for Training Mobility Researchers in the 5th FP; Marie Curies in the 6th FP; People ITN for Initial Training Networks in the current 7th FP) have also helped to spread the idea and practice of different forms of European doctorates. The guiding principals of the above mentioned programs were to create a Europe of knowledge, a stimulating environment for research, teaching and innovation, able to compete internationally with the most renowned academic institutions and to consolidate a tradition of recruiting the best minds and promote co-operation with universities around the world. In this scenario, the European Doctorate is a fundamental and strategic tool.

In their recent book entitled "*Toward a Global PhD? Forces and Forms in Doctoral Education worldwide*" (2008), Maresi Nerad and Mimi Heggelund, both of the University of Washington, explored the consequences of globalisation for doctoral education. In their view, joint doctorates belong to the future-oriented model of doctoral education, called Mode 2.

In this article we briefly introduce its distinctive features, defined as a jointly established multilateral degree awarded by at least three universities in three different European countries on the basis of inter-institutional agreements. These agreements establish the criteria for planning, implementing and monitoring an international network-based doctoral programme.

In our vision, the European Doctorate is not merely a traditional doctorate with an added international dimension (*co-tutelle*, international mobility, etc). Although having similar goals, internationalisation and international doctorates are *two distinct models*. A joint doctorate commits institutions to integrate all aspects of the programme, making it something more and different from an additional certificate. What is missing in the widely misused formula of "European Doctorate" is the magic word "joint", that clearly distinguishes it from those forms of doctorate which have merely opened up to some degree of internationalisation. Recruiting applicants world-wide, allowing research trainees to spend some time abroad, allowing them to take courses or to write their dissertation in languages other than that of the country where the doctorate is being pursued, involving foreign supervisors in *co-tutelle*, creating synergy between doctoral training and international cooperative research teams, promoting international networking, inviting foreign experts to participate in the final jury, etc: although all these are essential, no single element or combination of elements is sufficient to qualify a doctorate as European or international. What clearly distinguishes a jointly established European/International doctorate is that it has a well-defined joint programme based on the structured integration of all these elements and more, defined in inter-institutional agreements that include the award of a joint degree.

In our previous articles, we also presented a long series of "musts" for establishing a joint European doctorate, from network build-up until the recognition of the joint degree. These include the joint criteria that must be established within the network relating to the entire organisational process –from network build-up to the recognition of the joint degree. The "*musts*" refer to the joint criteria that need to be established by "institutionalised scientific networks" (which differ from the aggregation of individual scientists in "scientific networks" without an institutional commitment) for the entire process of planning, implementing and monitoring the programme's activities. These include global dissemination of the programme's publicity and recruitment policy, the selection of candidates, the structure of the research training programme in an international learning and research environment, language policy, monitoring via multiple supervision involving international physical and virtual

mobility, evaluation of the whole training process, the credit accumulation system, requirements for the defence of the thesis, award of a formally recognised joint diploma, career prospects in and outside academia, management at the network rather than at the individual institutional level, a clear division of tasks among the partners, a shared code of conduct for both supervisors and research trainees, IPR policy, quality control for the programme and its infrastructure, etc. (see [1], [2], [3], [4], [5], [6], [7], [8] [9]) [10]).

2. INSTITUTIONAL PARTNER COMPOSITION: RECENT EXPANSION AND DEVELOPMENT

The goal of the European/International PhD on Social Representations and Communication (<http://www.euophd.eu>) is to prepare researchers for traditional academic careers as well as providing the private and public sectors with the researchers and experts they need in the rapidly growing interdisciplinary field of Social Representations. To this end we directly involve both outstanding scholars and experts from the public and private sectors interested in societal issues and the role of communication systems in the process of knowledge production, diffusion and transformation. Via its innovative didactic programme, the European PhD plays an integral part in meeting the growing demand for researchers in the social sciences who are capable of working in different cultural and linguistic settings and gives young social psychology researchers the wide range of research methodologies and complementary skills they will need to accomplish their present and future research and professional goals, both inside and outside academia.

The European PhD recently expanded its scope both in and out of academia and beyond Europe's borders. This partnership between HEIs, enterprises and research institutes has opened the door not only to an increased transfer of knowledge, but also to expanding career opportunities for researchers. The EU consortium of the European Doctorate on Social Representations and Communication currently consists of 17 universities in 9 European countries (AT, CZ, FR, IT, PT, RO, ES, CH, UK) and 5 universities from Canada, Argentina, Brazil and China, who recently adhered via the Erasmus Mundus Joint Doctorate programme and institutional Agreements signed by the Rectors. It also includes a national research institute in France, a social science foundation (Maison des Sciences de l'Homme) and three SME partners in Ireland, Italy and Sweden.

One of the programme's great assets is the SoReCom THEmatic NETwork, a "network of networks". With more than 3,000 members in academic, professional research and commercial institutions interested in this area of social psychology, this network that grew out of the Euro PhD, has opened the door to contact with scholars and professionals around the globe. It provides synergies for scientific co-operation, not only at the institutional level, but also at the level of individuals or research groups located on different continents. This combination of an international scientific network, a joint European doctoral program and enterprise partners creates a unique integrated physical and virtual "campus" for the highest quality in advanced research training (<http://www.euophd.eu/SoReComTHEmaticNETwork>)

We were able to create this unique form of doctoral education thanks to funding by a series of EU and ministerial programmes since 1993 (For more details about its long term history of institutional recognition see the website at the address: http://www.euophd.eu/html/_onda01/02/00.00.00.00.shtml). In 2009 two major developments improved the opportunities created by our European PhD programme. The first was our expansion beyond the boundaries of the European Union through institutional partnerships with the University of Belgrano in Argentina, the Federal University of Santa Catarina in Brazil, the University of Ottawa in Canada and Beijing Normal University and Nankin University in China. The second was to include SMEs and research institutes directly in the training and supervision of doctoral candidates.

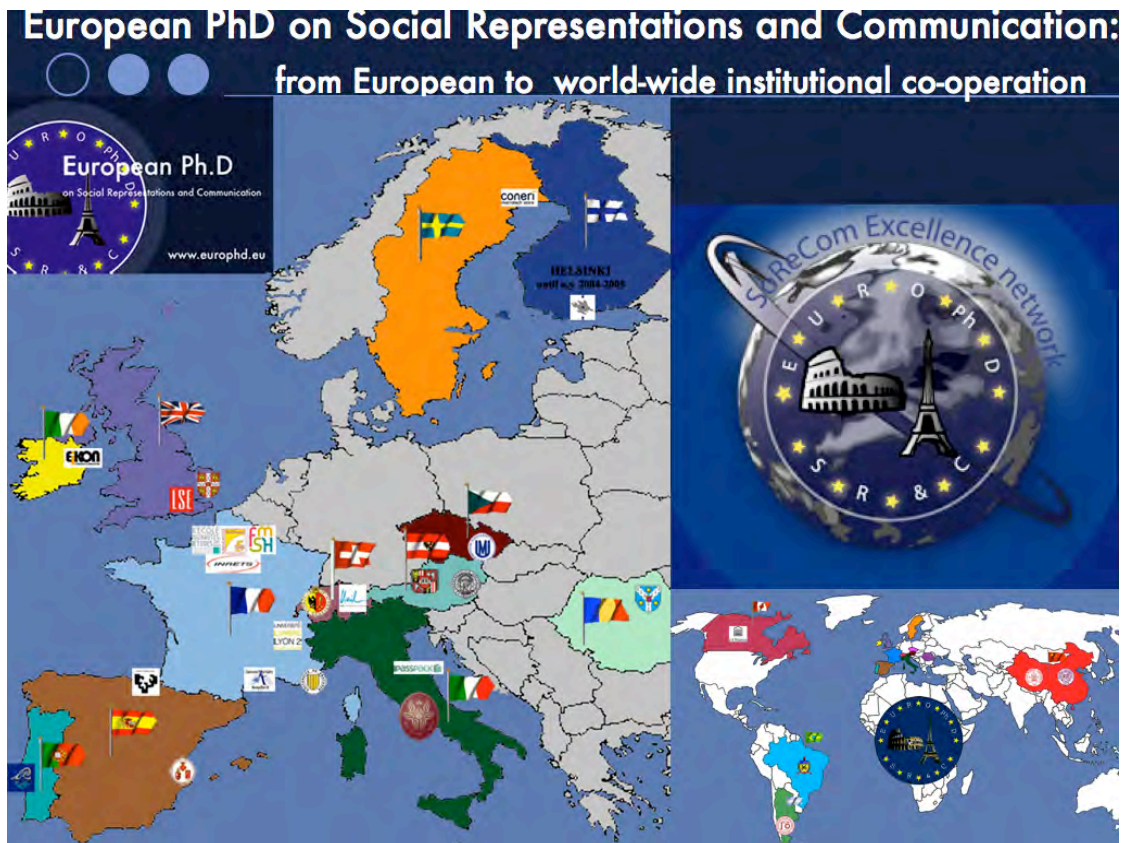


Figure 1 Map of the European Ph.D. on Social Representations and Communication: from European to world-wide institutional co-operation

3. PARADIGMATIC AND TRANSDISCIPLINARY THEMATIC AREAS

The European Ph.D. is focussed on a paradigmatic area of Social Sciences (from the main optic of the Social Psychology and Communication Studies) inspired by the Social Representations Theory, a unifying meta-theoretical perspective on the social construction of knowledge and its relation to socially situated practices and to traditional as well as new means of human interaction and communication. The doctoral training is open to multidisciplinary and multi-methodological research approaches (experimental and field work). Simply put, we study of “what” people know and “how” it relates to the social groups to which they belong and to the media. It involves leading scholars from both social psychology and the social sciences: sociology, anthropology, education, economics, linguistics, semiotics and communication and media studies. Social representations have significant implications for institutional and organizational contexts, culture and health practices, inter-group relations, ideology and politics, economics, the environment, etc. Training thus involves key areas such as interaction, the media, processes of social influence, languages, emotions and new contexts of virtual and mediated interaction. Training is conducted by research teams dedicated to training in advanced methodological skills and specific thematic areas and sub-topics (Figure 2). Our enterprise partners have special responsibility for training in the transferable career skills that researchers at all stages in their careers must have to be competitive in today's world, both inside and outside academia.

The synergies created by working within teams composed of academic, public and private sector institutions and enterprises, provide research trainees with a much wider experience both in terms of methodologies and content. It is also an opportunity to explore employment possibilities outside academia. Training in the SoReCom Euro Ph.D. programme is highly internationalised. The main research teams are focused on:

- theoretical and meta-theoretical issues related to the study of social representations
- multi-methodological contributions to the “theory of method” on social representations
- training “for” and “by” research in thematic areas of societal relevance
- training in complementary and technical skills offered by SMEs and Research Institutes



Figure 2. The main thematic areas of the co-operative network research teams of the European PhD on Social Representations and Communication programme.

4. Admission and Degree Requirements

The European PhD on Social Representations and Communication is open to applicants from both EU and non-EU countries, without any limitations in terms of age or nationality. All applicants are treated equally and selected exclusively on the basis of excellence, on a competitive basis using criteria jointly established by all partners, taking into consideration the compatibility of individual projects with the programme's research themes and a comparative analysis of qualifications. In accordance with EU policy, the SoReCom Euro PhD and its related programmes (International Summer Schools and Lab Meetings) fully support and promote equal opportunity for women and men. In addition, the 'Virtual Campus', with its innovative and flexible combination of face-to-face and ICT opportunities for research and training, is accessible by research trainees from newer EU member states and beyond, including those with special needs.

Applicants from universities that do not belong to the network also are welcome to apply. To ensure that applicants are drawn from as wide a base as possible, each project partner is expected to invite applications not only from their own institution or country, but also from the largest possible pool of potential candidates.

Successful applicants must demonstrate a solid background in the Social Sciences, with preference given to those in Social Psychology also interested in Communication Studies, Sociology, Anthropology, History, etc. Candidates must be able to demonstrate advanced knowledge of at least two European languages, one of which should be English, the working language of the European PhD on Social Representations and Communication and another language widely used in the specialised literature on Social representations (French, Portuguese, Spanish or Italian). In addition, doctoral dissertations must be written in a national language of the European country where the doctorate is being pursued or in English.

A common web portal has been set up for the recruitment process, in order to centralise and unify admissions information and to stimulate applications from potential candidates by promoting

transparency and consistency in the information provided. Candidates apply directly to the Scientific Co-ordinator using the submission guidelines and on-line registration: (<http://www.euophd.net/cgi-bin/WebObjects/EventRegistration>).

The centralised model for administrative procedures avoids creating a situation where in different institutions or countries, guidelines and even admission criteria might be not accessible to all on equal terms. Centralised selection of applicants is also an opportunity to share responsibility from the outset of the applicant's relationship with the programme. It is also an opportunity for partners to reflect on the programme and its development. Adopting this centralised model has the added advantage of enrolling trainees at the network level –rather than at local university level –from the outset.

As part of the multi-lateral inter-institutional agreements on policies for fundraising and financial resource management, a common fee structure and centralised administration were established in order to overcome differences among countries and institutions in terms of financial policy and economic conditions.

In its role as co-ordinator, diplomas are issued by the University of Rome Sapienza with the signature of the rectors/presidents of the six universities which jointly confer the degree: University of Rome Sapienza (Italy), University of Aix-en-Provence, the University of Montpellier III “Paul Valéry” and University “Lumière” Lyon 2 (France), University Alexandru Ioan Cuza of Iasi (Romania), and Masaryk University, Brno (Czech Republic). The diploma carries the logos of all partner universities. In addition to the diploma, a Final Jury certificate is issued. It contains the composition (name and institutions) of the International Evaluation Board (Final Jury) and their signatures. It also names the national tutors and foreign supervisors and their institutions, the title and language of the full and short version of the dissertation defended by the doctoral candidate as well as his/her name, country of residence and the academic years of enrolment.

5. DIDATIC SYSTEM

The European PhD's didactic system is highly innovative, integrating face-to-face and open distance learning. Research trainees participate in an interlocking system of virtual and physical mobility, developing trainees' theoretical and meta-theoretical knowledge, methodological expertise and providing opportunities for extensive fieldwork, applied research, and acquisition of transferable skills. Partners jointly develop programmes, maximising added value for institutions and trainees alike. The interdisciplinary, multi-methodological and thematic possibilities offered by the training network are enhanced by outside experts invited to participate in intensive training "stages", multi-point videoconferences, tutoring and co-tutoring for individuals and small groups. Tutoring and co-tutoring (multiple supervision) is performed by three tutors located in three different countries via the Euro PhD open learning system. Both research trainees and teaching staff participate in required structured international mobility. Individual trainees must relocate for at least twelve months to two different research centres in two different countries. Collective mobility (virtual and physical) for trainees and tutors is achieved via intensive stages (International Summer Schools, Lab Meetings, etc.) that are an integral part of the doctoral curriculum. These scientific events are extremely important not only from a training point of view, but also because they enhance cooperation between the more advanced scientific communities working in Europe, the United States and Canada and research groups working in under-developed regions such as Eastern Europe, Latin America and Asia.

Continuous contact among partners and with research trainees is maintained through a common web platform that supports e-learning and distance learning tools, an e-library, and for tutors and scientific staff, on-line access to trainees' work. As mentioned above, research trainees are supervised by multiple tutors (at least one main supervisor and two co-tutors) at universities, enterprises or both, located in three different countries. The three annual Lab Meetings and the annual International Summer School are another opportunity for mobility and interaction, combining face-to-face interaction with mediated virtual interaction (internet forum discussion, web-videoconferencing, streaming videos on the web, etc.). International mobility is a required part of the curriculum both at the individual and collective levels. The philosophy of the European PhD

is that international mobility is a tool, and not in and of itself a goal. It is a hard and fast requirement for the degree.

Structured "physical" and "virtual" mobility: an integral part of the European Ph.D. on S.R. & C. research training

individual and collective PHYSICAL MOBILITY	individual and multiple VIRTUAL MOBILITY
<p>INDIVIDUAL MOBILITY: STAGE ABROAD in two different European institutions (sites of the two co-tutors) supported by Marie Curie fellowship, by grants from EC (Erasmus LLP), MIUR and University</p> <p>COLLECTIVE MOBILITY: INTERNATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOLS, supported by Marie Curie actions and MIUR</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distant individualised tutoring and research progress monitoring via personalised website for each research trainee - International Lab Meetings via Euro PhD web auditorium - Distant training on meta-theoretical analysis and access to specialised Virtual Library and bibliographic inventories

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Figure 3 Structured "physical" and "virtual" individual and collective mobility: an integral part of the European Ph.D. on S.R.& C. research training

The length of the training programme is three years from the day of enrolment (November 1 of each academic year). Research trainees may apply to the Executive Committee for an extension only in very exceptional circumstances. The duration of extensions is strictly limited to completion of the programme within four years, according to the Salzburg Principles, which specify a guideline of 3-4 years. The academic year is calculated in terms of earned credits rather than exclusively in terms of time, allowing for flexibility in meeting the needs of both full-time and part-time research trainees. Research trainees are awarded up to 60 credits per year (20 for courses and didactic activities and 40 for research quality and related bibliographic knowledge). Consistently with the recommendations of the EC DG-Education and Culture, the European PhD adopted the European Credit Transfer System (see the 2009 ECTS User's Guide) as an instrument for creating transparency and confidence in academic performance. Due to the integrated and joint nature of the program, we adapted the ECTS to provide a system for credit accumulation, rather than a comparison of distributed teaching offers and transfer of learning outcomes. It might therefore be more appropriate to call it an ECS. ECTS without the T means that the concept of "transfer" is not necessary in a jointly structured program.

European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)
adopted by the Euro PhD on Social Representations and Communication

20 for courses and didactic activities	10 credits per year	International summer schools
	5 credits per year	seminars and courses
	5 credits per year	multi-media and distance Interactive learning; transferable skills
40 for research each year =	30 credits per year	advanced research training
	10 credits per year	bibliographic knowledge
60 total credits in a year x 3 years = 180 total credits for complete curriculum		

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Figure 4 The E.C.S. (ECTS without the T) adopted as a system for credit accumulation, rather than transfer of learning outcomes, due to the integrated and joint nature of the program.

5. GUIDELINES ON CONDUCT, RESPONSIBILITIES AND QUALITY CONTROL SYSTEM

A clear definition of performance expectations for both research trainees and staff alike is an important aspect of transparency. Revised in accordance with the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Good Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, the SoReCom Euro PhD's jointly defined guidelines on conduct and responsibilities are included in the partnership agreements. They are also provided in writing to research trainees and training faculty at the beginning of their association with the programme. Research trainees need to be made aware of their rights and responsibilities at the very beginning of their relationship with the programme. One of the first actions after notifying candidates of their admission to the programme is to have each new trainee sign a formal doctoral candidate agreement that clearly outlines the commitments they must make to meet the requirements of the programme. These include attendance and participation, reports, work schedules, contacts with tutors, leaves of absence, a clear statement about IPR issues, etc. The consequences of not fulfilling the obligations of the programme are also made clear.

Likewise, supervisors and tutors are also informed of their rights and responsibilities from the outset. They must agree to use whatever tutoring and co-tutoring training formula has been adopted by the programme and must diligently fulfil their supervisory responsibilities for each of the research trainees they have been assigned.

Upon joining the consortium, each partner institution's Rector signed a partnership inter-institutional agreement that described in detail all aspects of the programme: didactic, financial and management and partners' obligations. The management structure includes: Programme Director, Scientific Coordinator, Core Executive Committee, Scientific Supervisor Board, Training Staff, SoReCom Euro PhD Recruitment Board, International Evaluation Board.

In conjunction with the programme's Scientific Board (i.e. representatives of each partner university), the Core Executive Committee designates the tutors appropriate to the preferences indicated by the candidates, taking into account the equitable distribution of tutorial assignments among the members of the European Scientific Teaching Staff and/or other institutions and research centres from outside the network. After selection, the national and two foreign tutors are responsible for the supervision of each PhD candidate for all aspects of his/her training.

From the outset, tutors conduct on-going face-to-face and on-line evaluations of the trainee's progress, and review the various versions of the research trainee's project (initial short version, intermediate extended version, final full and short versions) to ensure that the work meets the programme's quality standards. The necessary evaluation tools are installed on the web site for every registered participant in the programme. To ensure privacy, the assessment tools are accessible for consultation only by the three tutors (1 national + 2 foreign), the Scientific Coordinator, the Programme Director and the research trainee him- or herself.

Trainees must be readmitted to the programme after completion of each year. The decision to readmit is based on evaluations by the Scientific Board, tutors' reports and the results of the Quality Control and Monitoring System.

The final version of the PhD dissertation must be written in a national language of the European country where the doctorate is being pursued or in English (French is also possible, with authorisation from the Executive Committee). The shorter version written in English (or French, upon authorisation of the Executive Committee) must be in a format that will allow it to be submitted by the Board to authoritative international journals.

Authorisation to proceed to the defence of the dissertation is granted when the trainee has satisfactorily completed all other degree requirements (including the twelve-month mobility period) and after a careful evaluation of reports on the dissertation written by the three tutors located in three institutions of higher education in three different countries

In addition to the management activities, including the specific responsibilities for *internal quality control*, the research trainees themselves play a fundamental role in evaluating the programme via their feedback. They complete evaluation sheets for each scientific event, such as the intensive training *stages* held during the International Summer Schools, from both scientific and logistic points of view.

Apart from its internal quality control system, the programme is also subject to a yearly evaluation by both the co-ordinating University Sapienza *Doctoral Committee* and the *Evaluation Committee*, in line with the quality criteria established by the Italian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, widely shared by the academic Institutions and worldwide scientific communities. These evaluations cover information to be filled in national data base (CINECA) and University data base, including for example: the scientific productivity of the professors belonging to the programme, the attractiveness of the programme in terms of the number of applicants and their geographical provenience, the progress of enrolled participants, how many successfully completed their degrees, how long they took to complete their degrees, trainees' scientific productivity, career achievements, etc.

6. INFRASTRUCTURE AND FACILITIES

State of the art infrastructure and dedicated facilities at the co-ordinating university, the University of Rome Sapienza, and all network universities enable us to link physical and virtual mobility and employ innovative teaching, tutoring and management practices, creating a multi-lingual and multi-cultural virtual campus that spans the world. The Research Centre and Multimedia Lab in Rome is a fully equipped high-tech facility that is the nerve centre of the PhD programme. It guarantees technical support for training and management activities, including real-time interactive exchanges with all participants and partner institutions via a multipoint interactive videoconference system, the Euro PhD Web Auditorium linked with a vast network of other similarly equipped research centres both in and outside Europe. On-line assessment tools, which are an integral component of the Euro PhD's open distance learning system, are of fundamental importance in monitoring the quality of training and research trainees' performance. Tutors continuously monitor training using the tools found on the European Doctorate's dedicated web site.

Accessible from anywhere in Europe 24/7, in addition to training and management activities, users have easy access to publications, metadata and many other kinds of digital multi-format documentation (printed, pictures, audio-videos). The e-library not only gives research trainees access to documentation, but in the physical and virtual space of this infrastructure also they can also meet authors and each other to discuss new publications and critical research areas. This interactive "virtual" campus guarantees cross-fertilisation of ideas between senior scientists and early research trainees, as well as between experts from within and outside of academic circles, including policy makers interested in research on societal issues and their relevance in social contexts. Open access to the integrated physical and virtual SoReCom THEMatic NETwork infrastructure allows members of this knowledge community to continue to grow. Briefly stated, the tools available at the European PhD on Social Representations and Communication Research Centre and Multimedia Lab give us the possibility to have real time interactive exchanges with all our participants, our academic partner institutions, and experts around the globe providing a rich and ever-growing research and learning environment that is advantageous to research team members, trainees and experts alike.

7. RESEARCH TRAINEES' BENEFITS

The European PhD provides many benefits for research trainees including access to the world's leading experts on the Social Representations Theory and collaboration with internationally recognised research teams and centres of excellence in 11 European and 4 non-European countries. European standards are guaranteed both for the application process and training received within the programme. Trainees have access to far wider options for research than would be possible nationally and clearly benefit from the cultural/linguistic advantages of living and studying alongside doctoral students from other countries. Thanks to the established relationships between academic and research institutions and private companies and the introduction of the transferable skills as integral part of the programme, trainees acquire core and wider employment related skills, designed to expand their career opportunities inside as well outside of academia. Not to be

forgotten is financial support, often a major factor in research trainees' ability to participate in training that involves mobility and "stages", which allows us to select the best applicants irrespective of their personal financial situation. In addition, upon entry into the European PhD programme, a career development plan for each research trainee is established, which continues to be monitored after the trainee has completed his/her degree via the active European PhD Alumni Organisation. We encourage research trainees to develop a sense of belonging to the Euro PhD scientific community, both via the Alumni Organisation and the 3000 member worldwide SoReComTHEmatic Network. This is not only important for the individual and his/her networking activities, but for the programme's development as well. Maintaining contact allows us to follow graduates' professional progress and obtain input on what skills are the most important for the development of the next levies of research trainees, as well as what new skills need to be added to the programme to make our graduates competitive. It is also an opportunity to take stock of the kind of job opportunities becoming available both in and outside academia so that we can provide up-to-date career counselling for our trainees and graduates.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Over fifteen years have passed since the European PhD on Social Representations and Communication was established. The programme started out as an academic consortium of thirteen universities and has grown to include full partnerships with research institutes and small and medium sized enterprises in Europe and around the globe. We believe that the influence of the European PhD has been felt in many sectors of Social Sciences and that this influence will continue to grow as it and the SoReCom THEmatic NETwork grow worldwide. Using advances in communication technologies to their full advantage, we provide both face-to-face and ICT opportunities for research and training and will be extending this highly successful and quality programme to more academic and professional partners in Europe and beyond. Its international and multilingual character benefits not only its doctoral students and the institutions that participate in the programme, but also "life-long learners" in Social Sciences wherever they are in the world. This European/International PhD has already expanded career opportunities for our graduates also outside of academia, for example, in media, financial and public institutions, as well as having encouraged the development of new enterprises. We have incorporated flexibility in our programme to cater to trainees' research needs and have designed the curriculum in a way that gives them both the core and wider application skills that will open a greater variety of career doors both within and outside academia.

The European PhD is doing its part to modernize European higher education and overcome the barriers that inhibit efficient knowledge transfer between academia and enterprises, enhancing career prospects for European researchers in social psychology and in the social sciences in general. It has also served as a prototype for similar programmes in the other social, human and natural sciences.

Private sector/university collaboration for training PhDs is relatively rare in the social sciences in Europe and represents a path forward. Innovative training programmes for core and wider employment related skills makes European research training more relevant to a wider variety of careers and globally more attractive, producing researchers who have the skills necessary to analyse and resolve social policy problems in a trans-national perspective, as well as providing European industry with the experts it needs as new media and means of communication continue to expand.

In conclusion, we firmly believe that this type of inter-institutional co-operation represents one of the key routes for the future of doctoral studies (given strong multi-lateral institutional commitment, good management and sustainability of the joint programmes) and hope that the road we have taken can provide a useful example for others interested in developing joint degree programmes and in opening to non-academic components. This innovative model of institutional network-based research-training represents an opportunity for improving the attractiveness of European institutions and enhancing scientific co-operation not only within Europe, but as competition in education and research and the economic marketplace are inevitably interlocked, also around the world.

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