

# EARLY-STAGE RESEARCHERS

THE DOCTORATE AND THE  
POSTDOCTORATE IN LATVIA



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# International best practice

1. Despite different types of doctorates, the production of knowledge through original research remains at the centre of the doctorate.
2. Doctoral cycle serves to prepare doctoral candidates for both academic and non-academic careers.
3. Doctoral schools are spreading in Europe (29% in 2006; 84.4% today): they provide a focus for inter- and multi-disciplinarity, softs-skills training and quality assurance of the whole cycle.
4. Two essential attributes: an adequate research environment and good supervision.
5. National and international cooperation, on the basis of agreements
6. Universities are responsible for the promotion process

# The Postdoctorate in Europe

- **The postdoc is usually a fixed-term position between the doctorate and a permanent academic position.** It is not an obligatory step to advance in an academic career.
- **Postdoc** are usually expected to carry on their research during which they might serve as the junior supervisor of doctoral students. They may have some teaching duties, as well.
- **The European Charter and Code for Researchers recommends** clear rules and explicit guidelines for the recruitment and appointment of postdoctoral researchers, including the maximum duration and the objectives of such appointments.

# The Latvian situation

- Doctoral candidates are not funded
- Attention to the research environment is required: doctoral students may be trained in institutions that have no right to confer the doctorate
- The promotion process is not the responsibility of the universities
- The training is for academic careers mostly
- The apprenticeship model is still predominant
- Doctoral schools are rare
- National and international cooperation is rare
- The post-doc is loosely defined

# Early-Stage Researchers:

## 12 Recommendations for Latvian Universities

1. The principles for the admission, progression, and assessment of doctoral students should be defined at the central level.
2. Good supervision should be framed by a set of regulations and procedures.
3. All institutions that engage in doctoral education should ensure a stimulating research environment to their doctoral students.
4. The taught component and skills development should prepare doctoral students for academic and nonacademic careers.
5. An institution-wide policy and related procedures for establishing an examination committee should ensure objectivity and fairness.
6. HEIs should provide career support for doctoral students to move into academic and nonacademic jobs, and grant them access to teaching and research assistantships.

7. The quality of all aspects of the doctorate should be continuously monitored and assured
8. Doctoral schools should institutionalise doctoral training and promote its quality.
9. Doctoral partnerships should be framed by a general policy and specific agreements for each student.
10. Stakeholder involvement in doctoral school governance should be encouraged.
11. The postdoc should be framed by appropriate policies and guidelines.
12. Postdocs should have access to career advising.

# Early-Stage Researchers: Recommendations for Latvian Authorities

1. Define the standards of the doctorate, in consultation with the higher education sector.
2. Define the standards and criteria for conferring the doctorate and the associated quality assurance mechanisms.
3. Set national priorities in broad (inter)disciplinary fields (including arts, humanities, and social sciences) while preserving some funding for blue sky research.
4. Review funding mechanisms for the doctoral level to ensure completion, and to promote efficiency and quality.
5. Ensure that research is at the center of the doctoral experience.

# Fundamental Principles of the Doctorate in Europe: The Salzburg Principles

**“The core component of doctoral training is the advancement of knowledge through original research. At the same time it is recognised that doctoral training must increasingly meet the needs of an employment market that is wider than academia.”**

**Salzburg Principles, 2005**

1. Doctoral education rests on the practice of research
2. Doctoral candidates must be allowed independence and flexibility
3. Doctoral candidates need to be prepared for careers inside and outside of academia
4. Institutions are responsible for their doctoral candidates