

KRECon Communiqué on Doctoral Education (2022)

The Knowledge Research Education Conference – [KRECon 2022: Doctoral Schools – Enhancing Research Careers](#) organised by the National Library of Technology was held on 10–11 November 2022 in Prague as part of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union events under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and Government Council for Research, Development and Innovation. The Conference brought together international experts in doctoral education, along with representatives of the national actors in the Higher Education and R & D & I sector as well as early-career researchers to discuss the future of doctoral education in the Czech Republic and Europe.

Positive changes in the structure of doctoral education are needed. Doctoral schools represent the most advanced level of organisational support structure for researchers' training in Europe. A more flexible and innovation-oriented curriculum for doctoral programmes at higher education institutions can facilitate the transition into various career paths and help doctoral graduates to perform multiple research roles. Attractive, sustainable, academic as well as non academic research careers that have interdisciplinary, international, and intersectoral dimension should be a sound part of a research culture that focuses on the well-being and quality of life for researchers.

With this communiqué, we would like to propose recommendations and support Czech Higher Education Institutions, academic stakeholders and decision makers to improve national and institutional regulations on doctoral education by introducing doctoral schools in the Czech Republic **to attract and select talents and train them in a well-supported research environment to become critical thinkers and drivers of change and innovation in society within and beyond academia**. This will also contribute to personal and institutional development and lead to a positive impact on our society.

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Recommendations

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- 1. ESTABLISH institutional Doctoral Schools that oversee structured doctoral programmes to ensure consistent quality of doctoral education at international level.** Reforms of doctoral education in the Czech Republic should include provision of support to develop the concept of doctoral schools and finance their establishment at Czech universities. Public expenditure on doctoral education should be seen as public investment in the development and nurturing of young research talents.
- 2. ENSURE that Quality standards for doctoral programmes are defined differently from the standards for the first and second cycle.** While two first cycles are predominantly educational and focused on teaching, the third cycle, doctoral programmes, is focused on research. It is training for research by doing research. Doctoral education should be flexible and highly individualised, respecting personal research interest and different career paths. Quality standards of doctoral education should ensure a research environment in which the content of doctoral programmes and research opportunities as well as transferable skills are fit for purpose.
- 3. RECOGNISE doctoral candidates as early-stage researchers and treat them accordingly.** Doctoral candidates are research professionals who make a key contribution to the creation of new knowledge. The doctoral candidates enrolled in full-time doctoral programmes are engaged in a research career and should, to the maximum extent possible, be employed/hired under an employment contract or other direct contract with equivalent benefits, including social security.
- 4. IMPROVE working conditions for doctoral candidates to make research careers more attractive to young talent.** Ensure decent financial conditions and necessary non-financial support for doctoral candidates and provide them with a stimulating and enabling environment, thus fostering a culture where individuals and research groups are valued, encouraged and supported to carry out their work.
- 5. ENSURE effective supervision, mentoring and career guidance for doctoral candidates.** Supervision is an essential part of successful research, while mentoring and career guidance is crucial for research career advancement. Doctoral schools should provide training for the professional development of supervisors or supervisory team members as well as support services for mentoring and career counselling appropriate for early-stage researchers.
- 6. PROVIDE training and support for doctoral candidates to develop research and transferable skills relevant to diverse career paths in and beyond academia.** Higher Education Institutions should ensure transferable skills training as an integral part of doctoral programmes in line with Open Science and Research Integrity, in cooperation with research infrastructures where relevant, to enable researchers to better tackle societal challenges as well as to increase their employability.

We, the participants of the KRECon 2022 Conference address the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic; Government Council for Research, Development and Innovation; Czech Academy of Sciences; Czech Rectors Conference; Council of Higher Education Institutions; Czech Association of Research-Intensive Universities; National Accreditation Bureau for Higher Education and other relevant national bodies, and call on them to embrace the ideas and appeals stipulated in this KRECon 2022 Communiqué and to implement them in practical steps and policies.

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was drafted by the Conference Board
and supported by other speakers
at the conference (in alphabetic order)

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The support reflects the views of the Conference Board members and speakers in their personal capacity.