

Concept Note: European Doctoral Day

Objective : Designate May 13th as European Doctoral Day.

In a Europe that upholds science and research as core values, this initiative aims to affirm the importance of doctoral education and doctoral graduates for Europe as a whole. They are essential drivers of innovation in society and for humanity, crucial for addressing the challenges of a world in transition and securing Europe's scientific, economic, industrial, and technological future. The initiative also seeks to enhance the attractiveness of doctoral education for both European and international students, raise employer awareness and recognition of doctoral qualifications, and highlight the diverse career paths and societal impact of doctoral graduates.

Context

In an international context where science is being increasingly challenged, the attractiveness of scientific careers to students and the recognition of the skills of PhDs in all sectors of society are at risk and need stronger support than ever before.

Moreover, with the advent of the knowledge society and demographic transitions, the gap between the historical role of the doctorate in society (training new generations of academics) and the reality of employment for today's doctorate holders (increased needs and opportunities in corporate R&D, non-profit international organizations and other organisations that need people trained to be creative, original rigorous thinkers) leads to long and sometimes challenging professional transitions from doctoral studies to the job market. This issue affects the majority of developed countries, including European nations, where there is a need to encourage younger generations to pursue scientific careers.

Why a Dedicated Day?

Many national, European, and international days have been established to draw attention to significant causes or public interest issues. For example, UNESCO declared March 4th as the "World Engineering Day for Sustainable Development." Creating a dedicated day will help highlight this topic in the agendas of all stakeholders, coordinate and publicize their actions, and amplify their impact.

A European Doctoral Day would also contribute to building a shared European identity and highlight the cultural and intellectual diversity of the European scientific landscape. The Age of Enlightenment was European, as was the Humboldtian model of research-based education.

Although doctoral training traditions and methods vary from one European country to another, Europe shares a common vision of the doctorate and doctoral candidates. The Bologna Accords and the European Higher Education and Research Areas (with programs like MSCA, the HRS4R label, and the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers) have had transformative effects that deserve greater recognition.

Finally, by dedicating a day to doctoral education and research, the **EU** would also be helping to consolidate a scientific community around a very unifying issue. This would enable the mobilization of the scientific community at the European level through various networks that could naturally embrace this event, such as the European Universities Alliances and specialized networks that unite the European doctoral community (EUA - Council for Doctoral Education, LERU – Doctoral Studies Policy Group, Coimbra Group - Doctoral Studies Working Group, Pride Network, Eurodoc and others)

Implementation

To start the project: It would be useful that many European universities, companies and other institutions and networks of institutions and companies declare their support in principle for this initiative to facilitate coordinated action.

The following questionnaire can be used to collect statements of support in principle for this initiative :

<https://grist.numerique.gouv.fr/o/docs/forms/v3NQZjo2Y61sA4QqJ4KX8D/4>

Timing: May is the month of Europe, allowing for outdoor events and avoiding interference with other existing science-related events.

Given the international context, the announcement should be made as soon as possible and by as many universities as possible, in a coordinated manner, to demonstrate the importance that European universities and Europe as a whole place on doctoral education, not only for academic careers but for science and society at large.

The **announcement** of the day chose as European Doctoral Day could be made, for instance, **on May 13, 2025**, with the **first edition** of the events taking place **on May 13, 2026**, giving universities, university groups and other employers of doctoral graduates sufficient time to organize them.

Then, efforts toward labelling the 13th of May as European Doctoral Day in the EU by the European Commission should also begin promptly and build upon a successful first edition in European universities and countries.

Coordination around the events: A visual identity (logo) and a platform (e.g. a customized Eventbrite platform) would have to be defined to list and share all local initiatives and events organized across Europe. Financial and human resources may be sought from the European Union to facilitate the coordination of this initiative.

Events: The aim is to leverage existing events as much as possible and use this day to showcase successful experiences, inspiring others to follow suit and to organize annual events across all territories, involving universities and other doctoral-granting institutions, socio-economic actors and other relevant actors