



33. Bundestagung zur EU-Forschungs- und Innovationsförderung

13. – 15. Juni 2022 an der Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen

Dokumentation Workshop-Ergebnisse

WS 6: MSCA Joint Doctorates (JD) – Zunehmende Bedeutung für ein internationales Profil

Ziel des Workshops: Eruiieren der Motivation deutscher Einrichtungen, sich auf JDs und nicht auf klassische Doctoral Networks (DN) zu bewerben. Hierbei sollte vor allem herausgefunden werden, ob diese Bewerbungen im Zusammenhang mit Strategien der jeweiligen Hochschulen zusammenhängen, um deren Internationalisierungsstrategie voranzutreiben. Darüber hinaus sollte unter Einbeziehung der REA der Stellenwert der JDs aus Sicht der EU beleuchtet werden und ob diesen eine besondere Bedeutung zukomme, gerade auch im Zusammenhang mit den Europäischen Hochschulnetzwerken und der European Strategy for Universities bzw. den Überlegungen zum „European Degree“. Zudem sollten Herausforderungen bei der Implementierung der JDs zusammengetragen werden, um Verbesserungen/Vereinfachungen für die künftige Ausgestaltung der JDs erreichen zu können.

Ergebnisnotiz: Mehrere Teilnehmer/innen berichteten zwar von einem durchaus hohen Stellenwert der DNs (bzw. der ITNs in Horizon 2020) in den jeweiligen Hochschulen, jedoch sind die JDs (bzw. EJDs in Horizon 2020) nicht explizit in Internationalisierungsstrategien der Hochschulen eingebunden. Die Motivation zur Bewerbung lag vielmehr bei den beteiligten Wissenschaftler/-innen, die hierbei oft auf bereits bestehende Kooperationen zwischen europäischen Hochschulen (mit vielen bereits bestanden Cotutelle-Verfahren) fußten.

Deutsche Hochschulen setzen bei den JDs darüber hinaus besonders oft auf *double degrees*, nicht auf *joint degrees* – letztere bedeuten einen noch höheren rechtlichen und administrativen Aufwand im Vergleich zu den ohnehin schon aufwändigen *double degrees*. In eben diesen gemeinsamen bzw. doppelten Abschlüssen läge auch die größte Schwierigkeit in den Projekten, oftmals dauerte es sehr lange, bis die Ordnungen zur Verleihung der Grade ausgearbeitet seien. Hinzu komme bei den JDs die Problematik der Einbeziehung nichtakademischer Partner, dies gestalte sich schwieriger als in den klassischen DNs. Auch für die Promovierenden sei es eine große Herausforderung, innerhalb von drei Jahren neben den nötigen längeren Aufenthalten an mindestens zwei Hochschulen zu einer weiteren nichtakademischen Einrichtung entsendet zu werden. Als weitere Schwierigkeiten wurden identifiziert: die Finanzierung ende nach vier Jahren, die Nachhaltigkeit der neu geschaffenen, gemeinsamen Promotionsprogramme sei ohne eine erfolgreiche Wiederbewerbung in den MSCA selten möglich.

Gerade in Anbetracht der geringen Erfolgsquoten in den MSCA schreckten viele Konsortien vor diesem Mehraufwand im Vergleich zu den klassischen DNs zurück. Hier





seien niedrigschwellige Optionen zur Verstetigung der strukturbildenden JDs wünschenswert (gesicherte Anschlussfinanzierung). Ebenso sei der Managementaufwand in den JDs höher als in den DNs, Anreize in Form einer höheren Managementpauschale seien daher erstrebenswert. Kritisiert wurde zudem, dass die gemeinsame Promotionsvereinbarung als Deliverable sechs Monate nach Projektstart eingereicht werden muss. Dies schaffen jedoch nur die wenigsten Projekte. Im gleichen Zug wurde jedoch die Flexibilität der REA diesbezüglich hervorgehoben. Eine weitere Schwierigkeit liegt für die Konsortien in der Erstellung der Work Packages, da diese gut mit jedem Partner im Projekt zusammenpassen müssen.

Die REA wisse um die Schwierigkeiten bei der Durchführung und versuche, sich möglichst flexibel zu zeigen, was in den meisten Fällen gelänge (Fristverlängerungen für Erstellen der Promotionsordnungen). Joint Degrees seien die ausgereifteste und intensivste Form der europäischen Hochschulzusammenarbeit sowie ein wirklich strukturbildendes Element im Hinblick auf die europäische Doktorand-/innenausbildung (dieses sei der gewünschte Impact der DNs). Die Verbindung der JDs mit den Europäischen Hochschulnetzwerken sei wünschenswert, um sie nachhaltig zu etablieren (auch im Hinblick auf die Anschlussfinanzierung).

KOWI

■ *Kooperationsstelle EU der
Wissenschaftsorganisationen*



MSCA Joint Doctorates – Zunehmende Bedeutung für ein internationales Profil

KoWi Bundestagung 13.-15.06.2022, Tübingen

Katharina Spannhake (KoWi) & Felix Beckendorf (NKS MSCA)

Agenda

- 01 Einführung in die Thematik und Vorstellung der Leitfragen (5 Minuten)
- 02 Vorstellung der Sprecher/innen (15 Minuten)
- 03 Diskussion zu den Leitfragen mit den Sprecher/innen und Teilnehmenden (60 Minuten)
- 04 Wrap-up (10 Minuten)

Sprecher/innen des Workshops

- Frau Erika Sahrhage
 - EU-Referentin Universität Bielefeld
 - 1. Dezernat Forschungsförderung & Transfer (FFT) / Förderung EU und internationale Forschungsförderung
- Frau Dr. Cathrin Nourse
 - Wissenschaftliche Koordination – Centrum für Thrombose und Hämostase (CTH) Universitätsmedizin Mainz
 - Projekttitle: TICARDIO
- Herr Klaus Haupt
 - Referatsleiter der MSCA Doctoral Networks in der Research Executive Agency (REA)

Leitfragen des Workshops

1. Was war Ihre spezielle Motivation für das JD? Bzw. Warum fördert die EU speziell Joint Doctorates? Welche Prioritäten stehen dahinter?
2. Was sind die größten Herausforderungen / Fallstricke bei einem JD?
3. Wie könnte man die Attraktivität der JDs noch weiter steigern?

Marie Skłodowska-Curie - Innovative Training Networks - European Joint Doctorates (MSCA-ITN-EJD)

Erika Sahrhage, EU-Referentin, Universität Bielefeld



Die Universität Bielefeld 2021

14
Fakultäten

1969
Gründung

3.476
Absolvent*innen

24.396
Studierende

338.841.541
Finanzvolumen



Europäische Forschungsförderung



6

Teammitglieder

66

Projekte in HORIZON 2020

1234

Kooperationspartner aus 44 Ländern

35.435.429

Euro Bewilligungssumme

Marie Skłodowska-Curie in HORIZON 2020

19

MSCA Projekte

16

ITN (6 koord.)

2

EID

2

EJD

ExSIDE >>

Expectations and Social
Influence Dynamics in Economics

EPOC

Economic Policy in
Complex Environments

- Vorläufer: European Doctorate in Economics Erasmus Mundus (EDEEM)
- ExSIDE: Laufzeit 01.01.2017 bis 30.06.2021, sieben Beneficiaries
- EPOC: Laufzeit 01.03.2021 bis 28.02.2025, sieben Beneficiaries
- Beide ITN-EJD in der Fakultät für Wirtschaftswissenschaften, Projektleitung Prof. Dr. Herbert Dawid, Projektmanagement Dr. Ulrike Haake
- Jeweils drei Doktorand*innen an der Uni Bielefeld

Marie Skłodowska-Curie in HORIZON Europe

2

MSCA DNs

“ESSGN”

European Social Science Genetics Network
(Start 1. März 2023, Prof. Diewald, Fak. f. Soziologie)

“LEMUR”

Learning with Multiple Representations
(Start 1. Januar 2023, Prof.'in Hammer, Technische Fakultät)

→ To be continued!

TICARDIO

ein JD Programm zeigt Stärke durch Vielfalt

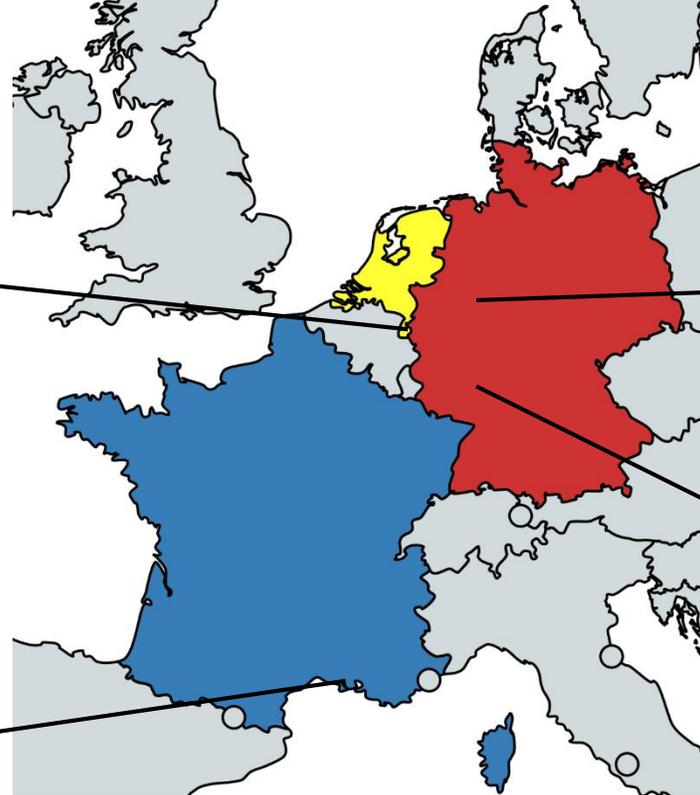
Dr. Cathrin Nourse

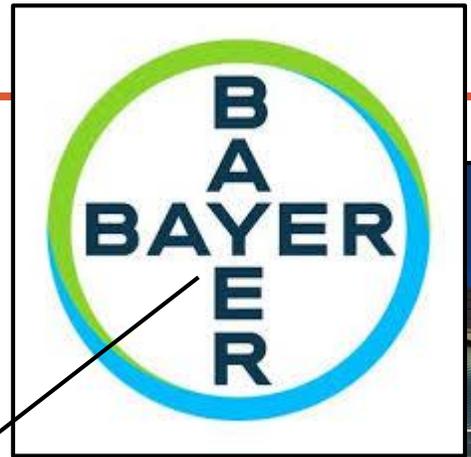
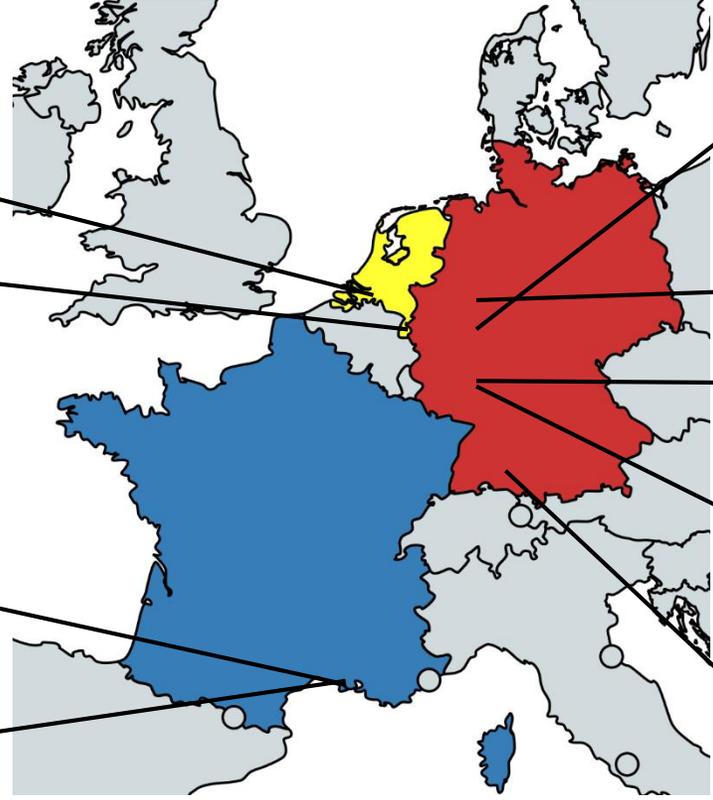
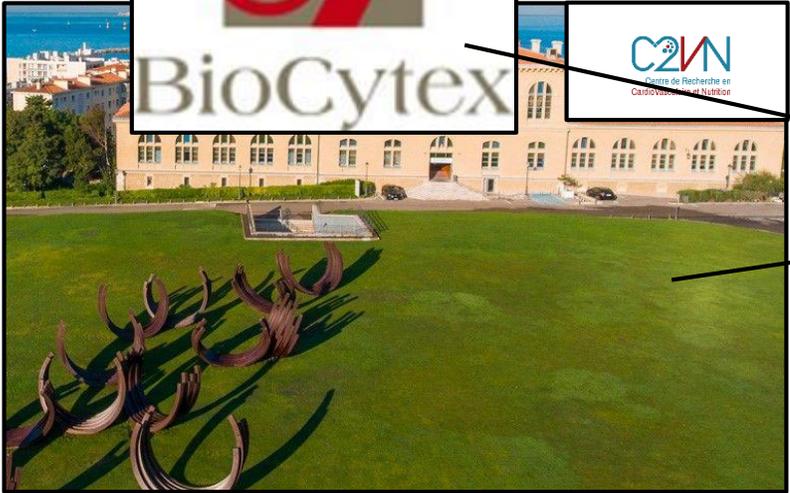
Wissenschaftliche Koordinatorin

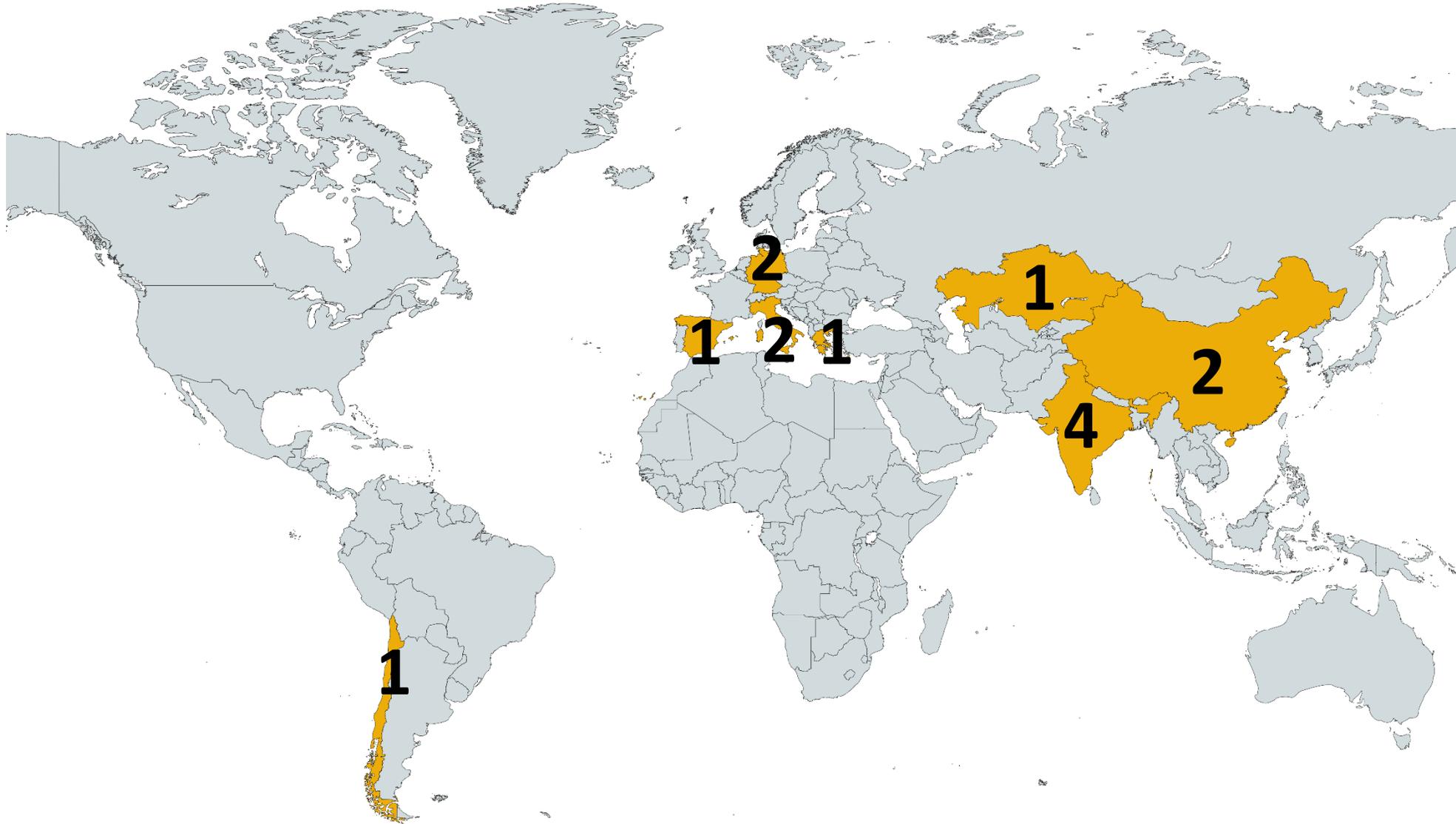
Centrum für Thrombose und Hämostase

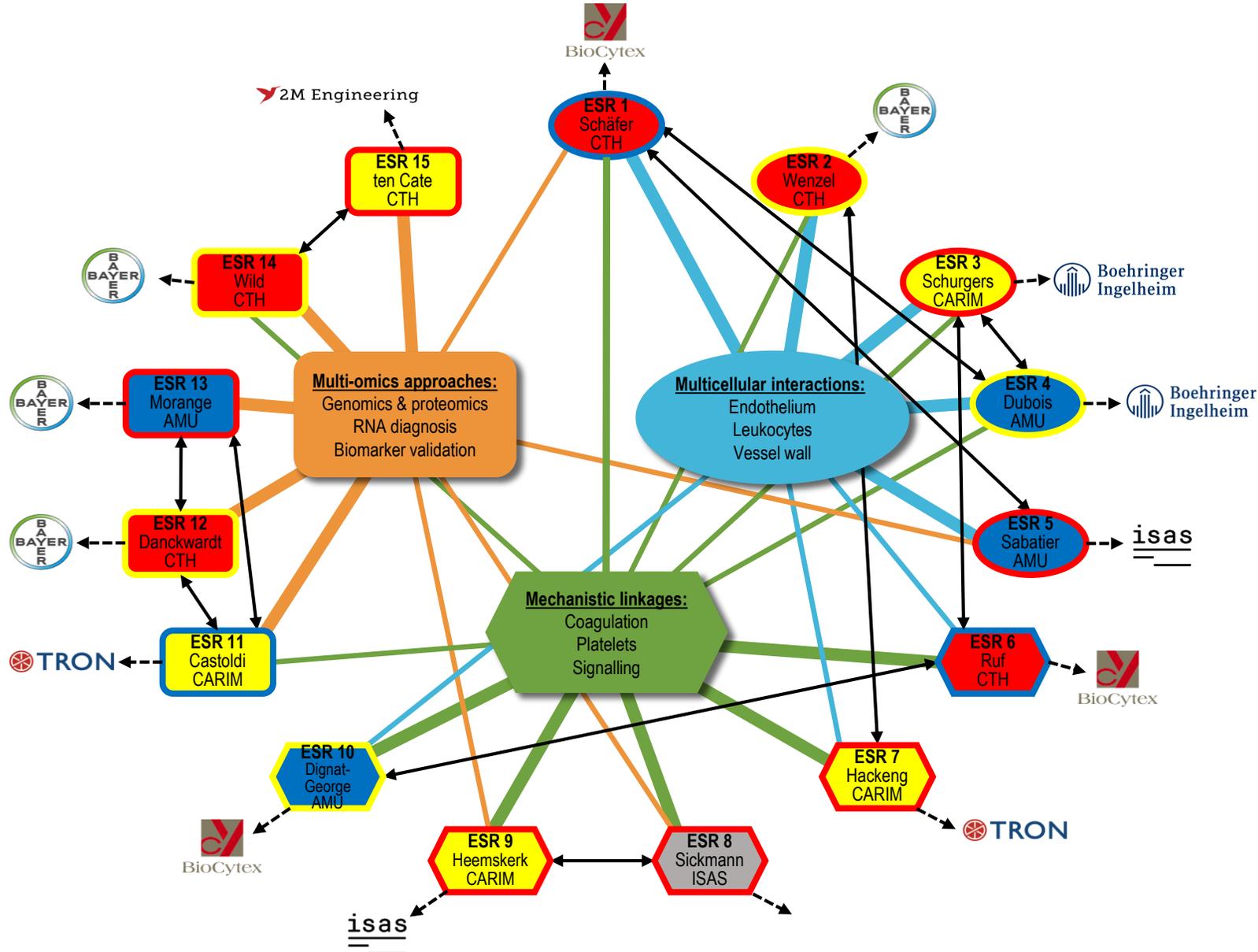
Universitätsklinik Mainz

Thrombo-Inflammation in Cardiovascular Disease
www.ticardio.eu







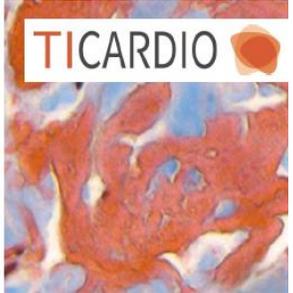


- Secondments
- Supervisory Team of 3
- Online Meetings with Supervisory Team
- Training Weeks
- Conferences
- ESR Gettogethers (virtual)

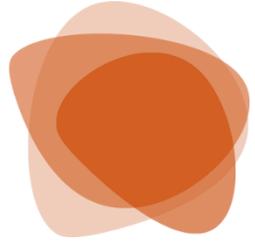
- Maastricht
- Mainz
- Marseille
- Dortmund



February 18-19 2021 - Virtual Symposium
THROMBO-INFLAMMATION



TICARDIO



Marseille 2023





Photo: Trisha Lahiri

MAINZER 11./12. Sept.
WISSENSCHAFTS**MARKT**

wima-digital.de

Mainzer Science Week



WISSEN
IM
HERZEN 



Meenzer Science-Schoppe

<https://www.wissenschaftsallianz-mainz.de/wissenschaftsmarkt/2021/science-sofa-ticardio>

YouTube Search: TICARDIO Science Sofa (811 views)

Vielen Dank für Ihre Aufmerksamkeit

TICARDIO has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and Innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 813409.



Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions

WORKSHOP 6

MSCA Joint Doctorates – Zunehmende Bedeutung für ein internationales Profil

Klaus Haupt
Head of Unit - MSCA Doctoral Networks
European Research Executive Agency

MSCA Joint Doctorates

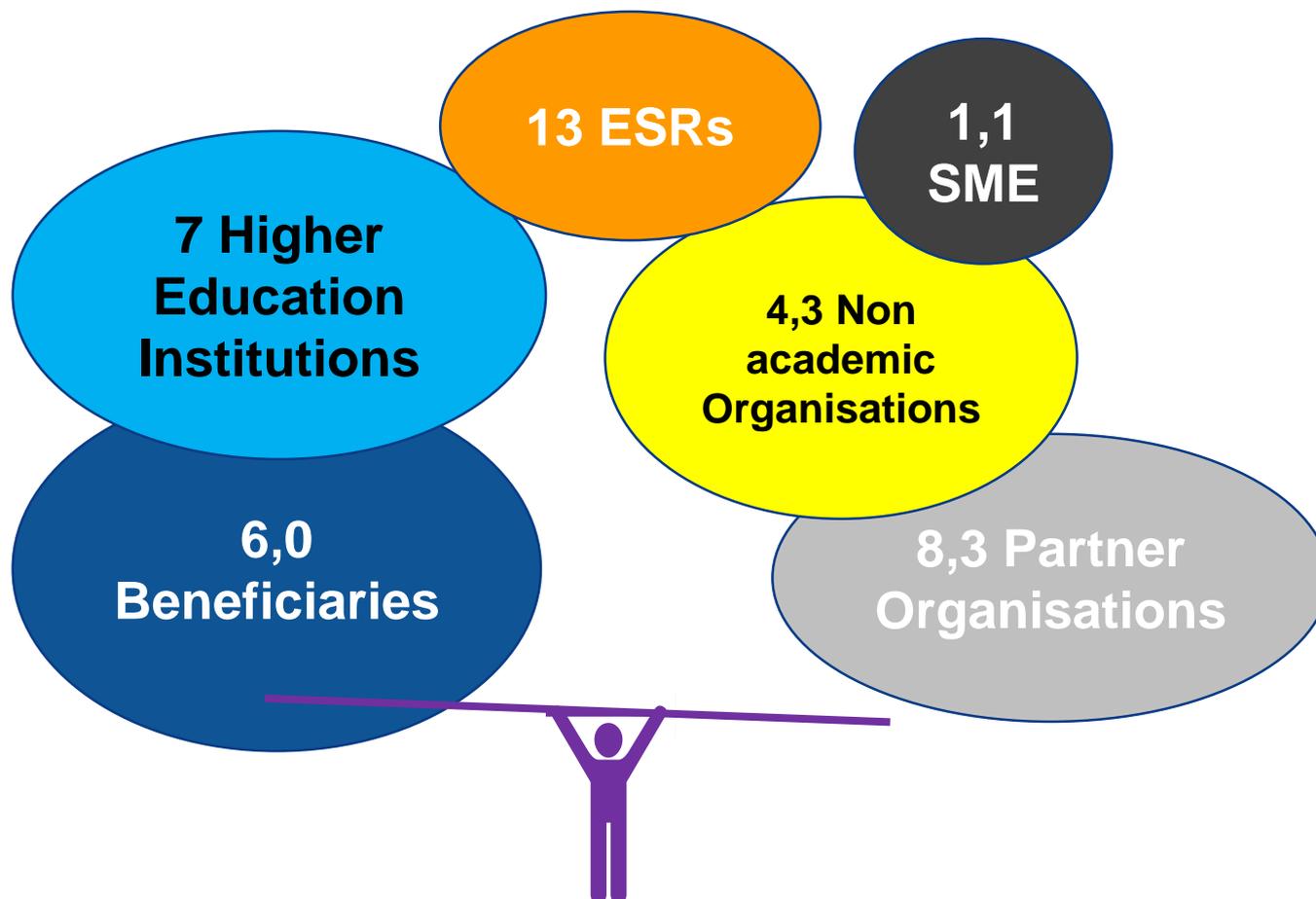
➤ Objectives

- Promote international, intersectoral and inter-disciplinary collaboration in doctoral-level training in Europe.
- Increase career opportunities of early stage researchers.
- Creation of joint doctoral programmes.
- Delivery of joint, double or multiple doctoral degrees.
- Structuring doctoral training at European level by developing sustainable joint doctoral degree structures.

What was achieved in H2020?

- **7** calls for proposals launched (2014 to 2020)
 - **547** eligible applications
- **76** top projects funded
- **> 263** MEUR funding
- **672** participating organisations involved
 - **367** academic organisations (**329** higher education institutions)
 - **305** non-academic organisations (**82** SMEs)
- **≈ 1200** fellows trained - **156** nationalities
- **10** projects selected under first Doctoral Networks call (Horizon Europe)

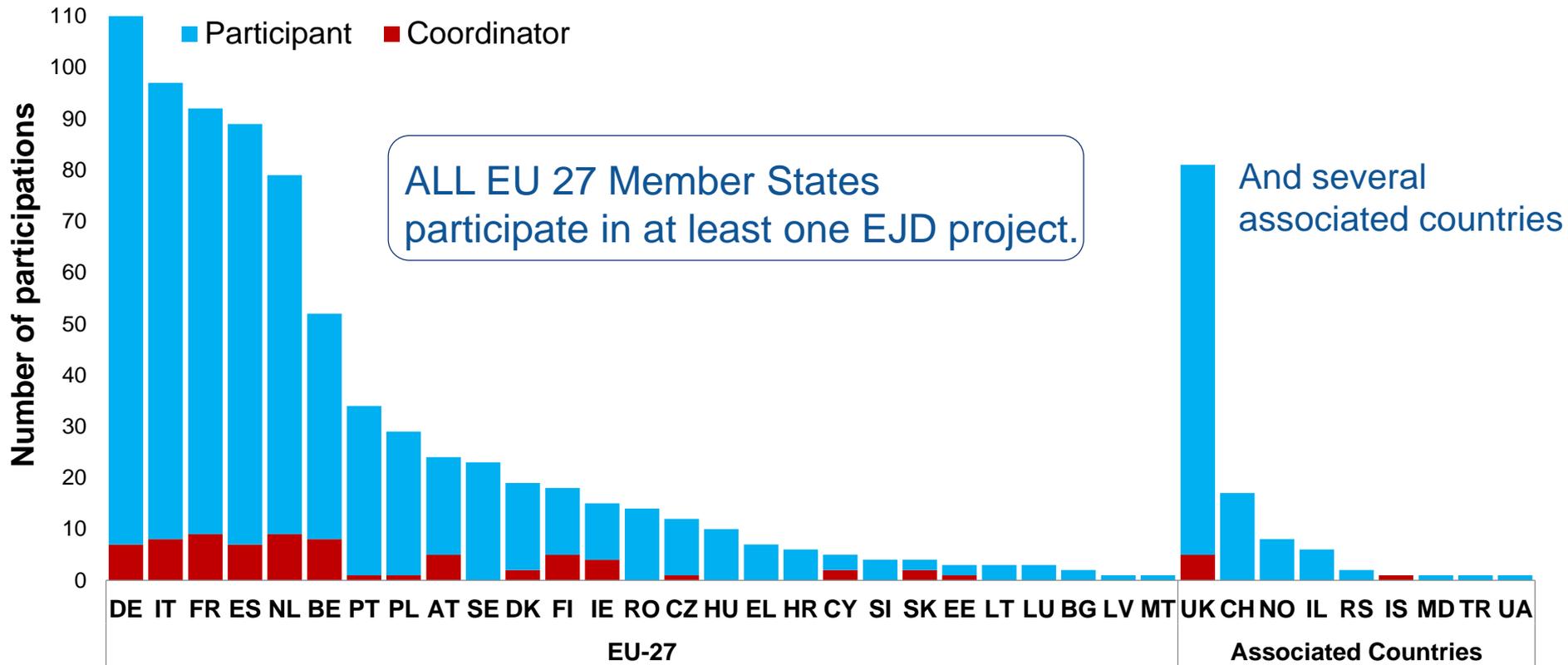
The “typical” EJD project



Smallest EJD: 3 beneficiaries – 6 ESRs

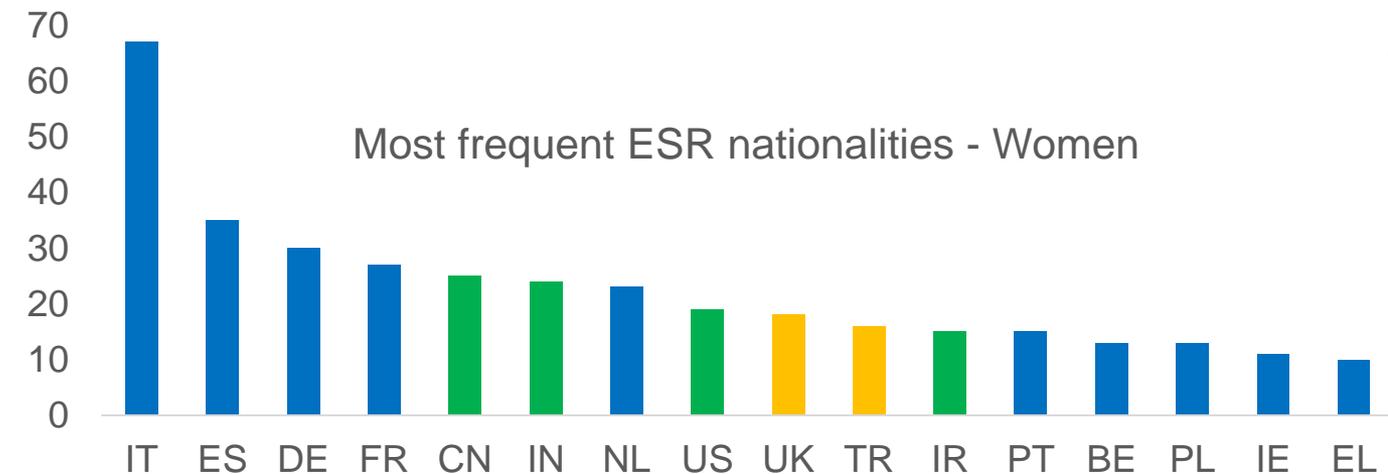
Biggest EJD : 26 (12+14) participants

What are the participating countries?

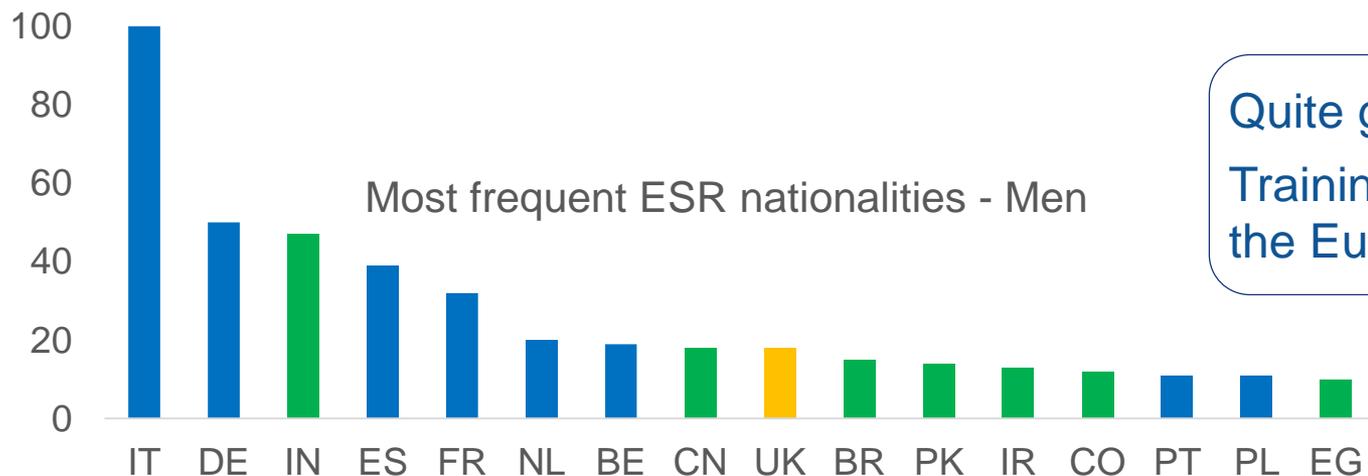
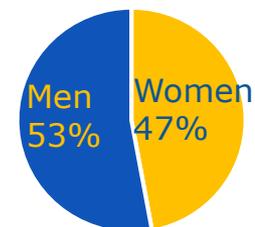


Plus: United States (12); South Africa (4); Australia (3); Japan (3); Kenya (3); Canada (2).
 UK: participated as EU MS in H2020 – not associated to HE at this point in time.

ESR / PhD students: who is trained?



Global gender balance

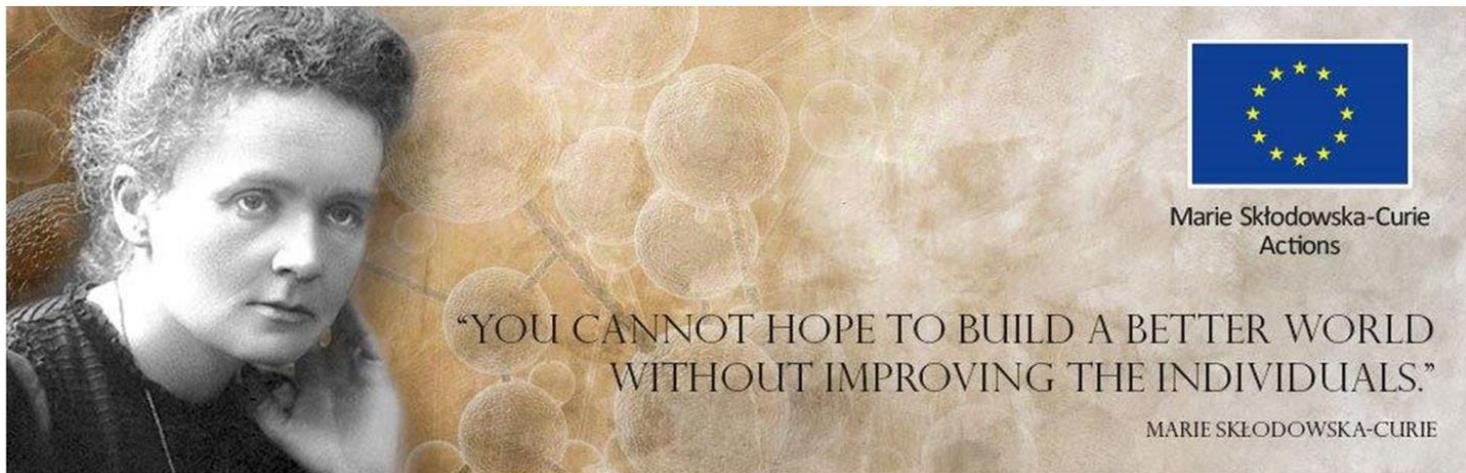


Quite good gender balance.
Training with impact beyond
the European Union.

■ EU Member States
 ■ Associated countries
 ■ Other countries

UK: participated as EU MS in H2020 – not associated to HE at this point in time.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION !





European Joint Doctorate Cluster Event

Meeting Report
and Key Messages for Policy Consideration

European Research Executive Agency, Brussels
9 November 2021

EJD CLUSTER EVENT – MEETING REPORT

April – 2022

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

European Research Executive Agency (REA)
Unit A.1 — Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Doctoral Networks

E-mail: REA-INFO@ec.europa.eu

*European Commission
B-1049 Brussels*

European Joint Doctorates cluster event

Meeting report

Manuscript completed in April 2022

1st edition

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Acknowledgement

This report is largely based on the notes taken by the following four experts invited to attend the event and appointed to draft specific parts of the meeting report: the main rapporteur Prof. Patrick A. MEERE (Head of Geology, School of Biological, Earth & Environmental Sciences, University College Cork, Ireland) and the three support rapporteurs: Dr Hiltrud BRAUCH (Senior Scientist, Dr. Margarete Fischer-Bosch Institute of Clinical Pharmacology, Germany), Prof. Malgorzata KACZMAREK (Professor, Soft Photonics Systems, University of Southampton, United Kingdom), and Prof. Christos PANAGIOTIDIS (Professor of Cell and Molecular Biology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece).

The whole report was coordinated by Laurence MARRAMA-RAKOTOARIVONY for the event organising team, from the MSCA Doctoral Networks unit, that also includes Ivan SCANNAPIECORO, Dana WEINTRAUB and under the supervision of Frank MARX and Klaus HAUPT. The experts' contribution is mainly presented in Chapters 2 and 3 of the report. The complementary parts (Chapters 1 and 4) were drafted and the full report finalised cooperatively by the REA organising team and DG EAC co-organising team, Sohail LUKA and Claire MOREL.

Acronyms

❖ DG EAC	Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
❖ DG RTD	Directorate General for Research and Innovation
❖ ERASMUS+	EU's programme to support education, training, youth and sport in Europe
❖ EU	European Union
❖ EC	European Commission
❖ EHEA	European Higher Education Area
❖ EID	European Industrial Doctorates
❖ EJD	European Joint Doctorates
❖ ERA	European Research Area
❖ ESR	Early Stage Researcher
❖ ETN	European Training Networks
❖ H2020	Horizon 2020 Programme (2014-2020)
❖ HE	Horizon Europe Programme (2021-2027)
❖ ITN	Innovative Training Networks
❖ MSCA	Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions
❖ REA	European Research Executive Agency
❖ SME	Small and medium enterprises

Foreword

The European Joint Doctoral (EJD) cluster event, which took place on 9 November 2021, was organised jointly by the European Research Executive Agency (REA) and the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC). The event was an important part of REA's overall strategy to promote networking and exchanges between participants in MSCA funded projects and to set up cluster meetings gathering projects working in the same area. In 2021, REA already organised two topical cluster meetings on cancer research and innovation and on the European Green Deal, which brought together researchers funded through the programme, policy makers from the European Commission and other relevant stakeholders. The EJD cluster event followed the same logic and enabled participants to share the lessons learned through EJD projects, to discuss the encountered challenges and to provide inputs for the policy-making process at the European Commission.

We are pleased to present the results of the event in the present report, which will be disseminated to all MSCA European Joint Doctorate projects funded under Horizon 2020 and to other interested stakeholders. The report will also constitute a source of inspiration for the MSCA Joint Doctorate projects that will be launched under Horizon Europe. The report is meant as a tool to disseminate good practices and to provide concrete recommendations on how to set up and to implement joint doctoral degrees.

By joining forces in organising this event, REA and DG EAC are confident that strong synergies have been created between policy and implementation at the European Commission level, for the benefit of the participants in the EU funded projects. Based on the outputs of the meeting and in line with the meeting's conclusion, we will endeavour to bring forward the listed action points including initiatives to overcome obstacles at institutional, national and European levels.

Begoña ARANO
Head of MSCA & Support to Experts
Department, European Research Executive
Agency

Claire MOREL
Head of MSCA Unit, Directorate-General
for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture

Executive summary

Funded under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) since 2014, the European Joint Doctorate (EJD) is a specific implementation mode of the Innovative Training Networks (ITN). The EJD was developed to provide a highly integrated type of international, inter-sectoral and interdisciplinary collaboration in doctoral training leading to a joint or multiple doctoral degree(s) awarded by the participating institutions. PhD candidates must be enrolled in a joint programme and be jointly supervised. On 9 November 2021, the European Research Executive Agency (REA), in cooperation with the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture of the European Commission (DG EAC), organised an event gathering relevant actors from EJD projects, policy makers and other stakeholders, such as doctoral candidates, MSCA National Contact Points and representatives from universities and national authorities. The MSCA EJD cluster event looked at the experiences of participants in the implementation of EJD projects to date and provided a platform for policy discussions with stakeholders. The aim was to document good practices and lessons learnt, and to provide recommendations to help address the remaining issues and bottlenecks.

The event confirmed that Joint Doctorates are attractive for doctoral candidates, universities and employers while being strategic for the EU as a powerful element in structuring the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the European Research Area (ERA).

For doctoral candidates, the amplified input from multiple research environments, and the multicultural exposure offered in a joint degree programme clearly increase the number and quality of their acquired skills and help them adapt better to ever-changing work environments, which in turn greatly enhances their employability. The doctoral candidates' career prospects are further improved with the potential for increased and more effective networking.

Although not a primary objective of EJD programmes, they have markedly increased collaborations within and between academic and industry participants when compared to standard programmes.

All of those beneficial and innovative attributes have had positive effects on the quality of individual university programmes. As such, EJDs have a positive structuring effect on participating partners whereby the collaboration culture and the needed administrative flexibility slowly become part of the DNA of Higher Education Institutions. EJDs are therefore very useful catalysts for building long-lasting collaborations and sustainable joint educational programmes and for raising the attractiveness of European doctoral programmes.

Despite such compelling attractiveness of joint doctorates, discussions during the event revealed a multitude of challenges faced when pursuing those degrees and which are detailed in this report. Participants also shared examples of good practice to circumvent obstacles as well as recommendations for removing them. The recommendations for further action referred to the consortium, national/university and European levels.

At the consortium level, participants stressed the necessity of early planning and proper networking for harmonised supervision and monitoring within the consortium.

It was deemed very important that the joint governance structure for the project should be set up early on during the initial project development phase and that the institutions' project management offices should be empowered to fully coordinate the project. This is particularly relevant regarding negotiations for consortium agreement. Another process requiring early planning is the recruitment of doctoral candidates. In order to avoid uncertainties and delays for applicants, project management and institutional administrations, EJD consortia should proactively define and communicate transparent recruitment procedures to guide the applicants, and all participating partners and institutions.

Proper EJD project progress monitoring requires well-designed tailored procedures, as well as good oversight and strong steering from the EJD Supervisory Board to ensure fairness for the doctoral candidates. The Supervisory Board needs to ensure that the progression of milestones and evaluation steps among consortia partners are fair and aligned. A real challenge for monitoring relates to diverging local requirements for PhD completions (e.g., thesis needs to be submitted within 3 years, requirements for additional funding to cover the 4th year) and how to align monitoring across institutions in a fair way under these circumstances.

Proper communication and networking among supervisors were particularly emphasised with regards to secondments and summer schools. While the benefits of the secondments and summer schools for doctoral candidates were clearly highlighted, there remain certain difficulties connected with secondments to non-academic partners.

At the national/university level, discussion largely revolved around administrative bottlenecks due to diverging rules and legislation.

It was generally agreed that university approval for enrolment in EJD PhD programmes and oral defence is a challenging procedure that frequently creates issues. Significant problems relating to legal and administrative frameworks include different countries having different and often incompatible regulations, bureaucracy bottlenecks and inflexibility with some national legal systems. These issues were complicated further by the challenges connected with the COVID-19 pandemic. Joint degrees are generally perceived by the organisations participating in the event as more desirable than double/multiple degrees, but they are also more challenging to achieve from an administrative standpoint. The main problem with joint degrees, issued as a single diploma, relates to the different grading/award systems from the contributing institutions. The double degree model better aligns with universities' existing expectations, which is to maintain the option of awarding their own diplomas. The importance of the *Diploma Supplement* was stressed as it can address the need to fully describe the makeup of interdisciplinary degrees.

Further examples of challenges encountered were language issues with documentations and thesis defence and the obligation in some countries for the doctoral candidates to be present in person for admission. There was general agreement that it is good practice to share solutions and experiences related to enrollment by having better communication structures, e.g. bringing together MSCA project coordinators to share experiences. It was indicated that a broader European approach would be very helpful in dealing with these potential legal barriers. The importance of initially reaching out to top administrative staff levels was emphasised.

Interestingly, participants pointed to lack of familiarity or even trust in the joint degree concept within the European tertiary education sector (e.g. Universities, institutes of technology, colleges of education). A major obstacle often arises at the level of issuing the diploma, as there is so far no predefined template or signature procedure for the formalisation of multiple/joint diplomas. Participants noted that joint/multiple doctoral degree formats cannot be arranged by individual institutions but must be addressed nationally and ideally at the EU level. Accordingly, a framework is required to clarify how joint/multiple degrees can be facilitated and how this could be formally documented.

At the European Level, it was generally acknowledged that a unified European Degree model would be very useful in setting the minimum quality standards for the degree award. While its details are still under discussion, a European Degree with a single 'set of rules', would solve several administrative issues. Many instruments (through the Bologna Process) are already in place. Some participants felt that a European Degree would require the establishment of a formal accreditation agency. Finally, it was noted that there is a likelihood that the European degree would be piloted as a quality label. This therefore could and should allow the degree model to be linked with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

Participants noted that the European Universities initiative and the upcoming Commission Communication on a European Strategy for Universities (adopted in the meantime by the European Commission) are bound to generate positive momentum towards facilitating transnational joint degrees.

Chapter 1 - Background

1. Introduction

Between 2014 and 2020, the Innovative Training Networks (ITN) were funded under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA), a core part of the EU's flagship programme for research and innovation Horizon 2020 (H2020). The ITNs had three different possible implementation modes, the European Training Networks (ETNs), the European Industrial Doctorates (EIDs) and European Joint Doctorates (EJD).

The EJD implement doctoral programmes by partnerships of universities, research institutions and infrastructures, Small and medium enterprises (SME) and other non-academic organisations.

Like all ITNs, EJDs were designed with the objective of promoting international, inter-sectoral and multi/interdisciplinary collaboration in doctoral-level training in Europe. Moreover, the creation of joint doctoral programmes leading to the delivery of joint, double or multiple doctoral degrees is a mandatory requirement for the EJD implementation mode.

In terms of structure, whereas a joint degree is defined as a single diploma issued by at least two higher education institutions offering an integrated programme and recognised officially in the countries where the degree-awarding institutions are located, a double/multiple degree refers to two or more separate national diplomas issued by two or more higher education institutions and recognised officially in the countries where the degree-awarding institutions are located.

The setup of such joint programmes at doctoral level proved to be very challenging. In particular, the award of a Joint PhD Degree raised major concerns usually not foreseen at proposal stage and sometimes not entirely solved during the projects' implementation.

With the view of setting up new Joint Doctoral Programmes, it is of utmost importance to identify potential blocking issues and their possible solutions as well as to exchange best practices based on experience and lessons learnt.

Furthermore, a European study is currently ongoing to explore the scope, benefit and feasibility of a European degree. This study is highly relevant for the joint doctorates as a possible way forward because, once in place, a European Degree could facilitate the projects' implementation from an administrative point of view.

For all these reasons, the MSCA Doctoral Networks unit (REA.A1), in charge of the implementation of ITN projects, organised the first MSCA-EJD Cluster Event in cooperation with the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture of the European Commission (DG EAC). This event brought together relevant actors from EJD projects, as well as policy makers and other relevant stakeholders.

While the event focused on the MSCA EJD experience, the conclusions/recommendations included in this report can be extended to joint doctoral programmes in general. Indeed, the in-depth analysis of the obstacles encountered in implementing MSCA EJD projects and presented in this event should provide valuable inputs to the policy reflections aiming at facilitating joint doctoral programmes in Europe.

2. EJD funded projects

The full portfolio of EJD projects funded under H2020 between 2014 and 2020 was analysed and presented during the event. A total budget of 263 million euro has been provided by the MSCA programme to support 76 EJD projects selected among 547 eligible applications. A total of 672 organisations were involved from both the academic (367) and the non-academic (305) sectors. As expected for this mode, the academic sector was essentially represented by higher education institutions (90%). More than 1200 researchers from all over the world (156 nationalities represented) were trained in doctoral programmes across Europe and beyond.

All the EU Member States and eight associated countries¹ participated in at least one EJD project. Some higher education institutions participated in several EJD projects while two thirds of them participated in only one EJD project.

The EJD specific objective to “Promote international, intersectoral and multi/inter-disciplinary collaboration in doctoral-level training in Europe through the creation of joint doctoral programmes, leading to the delivery of joint, double or multiple doctoral degrees” has been achieved through these 76 projects, improving in this way career prospects of the Early Stage Researchers (ESRs) recruited by these projects. In addition, the funding contributed to the creation and structuring of networks of higher education institutions with a good geographical coverage and diversity with regards to the level of experience in implementing international joint and/or double/multiple doctoral degrees.

In conclusion, the analysis of the EJD projects portfolio under H2020 shows that their implementation has raised awareness about international networking opportunities between higher education institutions and it has also generated experience among the participants in solving issues related to the development of joint international PhD programmes. This experience can be valorised to further support international collaboration in higher education. In addition, the diversity of institutions involved in EJD projects has spread the awareness of and experience in joint international PhD programmes in the wider EU higher education community. This has created a potential for continuing the networking process even though the sustainability of the structures put in place, often for only one EJD project, is not secured.

The full analysis of the H2020 EJD projects portfolio presented during the EJD event is provided in the [EJD event webpage](#).

3. Previous analysis from EJD projects perspective

At the beginning of 2020 an EU survey was sent to 52 EJD project coordinators (project calls 2014-2018). The survey was open during five weeks and received 34 replies, hence a response rate of approximately 65%. The purpose of the survey was to gather information in order to: identify and understand barriers for the signature of the agreement between the participating organisations issuing joint, double or multiple degrees, provide support to applicants and beneficiaries of MSCA-ITN projects and ease project management and improve the implementation of EJD projects. The questionnaire was composed of five blocks: general information on the project, doctoral agreement types planned in the project, time needed for signing the agreements, administrative and scientific barriers for agreements' signature and sustainability of the joint doctorates established.

Concerning the doctoral agreements planned, the respondents informed that 11 projects chose only joint doctoral degrees, 16 projects opted for only double doctoral degrees, 7 projects had joint and double doctoral degrees and that none of the projects planned to have multiple degrees. From the assessment of the survey results, it was noticed that there is no correlation among the number of different doctoral degree agreements, number of ESRs and number of beneficiaries in the implemented projects.

One of the most interesting data points received is related to the time needed for the signature of the joint/double agreements. In this regard, coordinators replied that their quickest agreement took from 3 to 27 months to be signed, while the slowest ones took from 6 to 44 months.

¹ By alphabetic order these associated countries under the H2020 programme are Iceland, Israel, Moldova (the Republic of), Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkey and Ukraine.

The requested time for the signature of the agreements was 6 months, as it was defined by the work programme. This limit was respected by only two projects.

Regarding the administrative and scientific barriers toward the signature of the joint/double agreements, the coordinators mentioned only few scientific issues and those could be easily solved. A large share of respondents indicated administrative barriers as the main reason for late signature of the agreements, caused by several iterations of discussion among the different beneficiaries. Such barriers lay at institutional level (university internal rules and regulations) and/or national level (legislation by Ministry of Education).

Concerning the sustainability of joint doctorates, coordinators were willing to continue the cooperation established in the project (at least with some of the members of the consortium) with the main obstacles that could jeopardise this cooperation being linked to resources (funding and staff).

At the end of the survey, coordinators had the possibility to provide suggestions for overcoming existing implementation issues. In this regard, they proposed, among others, the following actions to be taken at EU level: top-down approach by the EU, database of requirements and procedures for obtaining a PhD, to encourage/promote flexibility at university level and additional financial support from the EU to fund a 2nd PhD cycle, to ensure more sustainability of the joint/double procedures at the institution's levels.

The full overview of the background survey presented during the EJD event is available in the [EJD event webpage](#).

4. European Degree

Besides the well-known Erasmus Mundus and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions joint programmes, there are about 41 European University Alliances currently designing and implementing joint programmes based on international cooperation. These programmes are already strengthening the structuring effect on European transnational cooperation in higher education.

However, creating a joint programme and awarding joint degrees are difficult on the ground because of multiple obstacles of administrative and legal nature.

In this context, in its [Council Conclusions](#) on the European Universities initiative, the Council asked the European Commission to develop proposals to help remove the obstacles for cooperation at European level, including by exploring the need and feasibility for joint European degrees within the European University Alliances. The European Commission launched in April 2021 a study to explore the scope, benefit and feasibility of a European degree that would reflect the benefit of a transformative European higher education experience in the qualification the students obtain both for the purpose of further learning opportunities and for the labour market and social integration purposes.

The preliminary results of the study show that a European degree as a label to be given to joint degrees fulfilling a common set of criteria could be a good basis for future developments. For such a label to exist and be successful, the criteria will have to be defined carefully with the stakeholders. When talking about a European degree, it is also important to talk about the point of view of the different actors and what kind of advantages this European degree could bring to students, staff and higher education institutions.

The label will first be tested in a piloting phase to start in 2022. The criteria that will define the label during the piloting phase will be co-developed with the stakeholders and representatives of the Member States.

More detailed information is available in the slides presented by Yann-Mael Bideau (DG EAC) during the EJD event (see the [EJD event webpage](#)).

5. Event concept

Scope and objectives

The MSCA Doctoral Networks unit in REA is in charge of implementation of ITN projects on behalf of the EC and provides programme and policy feedback to the relevant DGs of the European Commission for their consideration. The MSCA Doctoral Networks unit joined forces with DG EAC to organise a joint cluster event on the implementation of the EJD projects and the associated funding mode. The comprehensive programme combined exchange of information among researchers leading EJD projects, and between these researchers and the relevant European institutions, with additional input from other relevant stakeholders such as National Contact Points, doctoral candidates, national administration and experts in EJD project implementation.

The event aimed to:

- Document and share good practices;
- Identify possible solutions to current bottlenecks;
- Provide policy feedback related to both project implementation and achieved impact;
- Gather insights to feed into the study being conducted on the European Degree;
- Collect outputs for the 1st Doctoral Networks coordinators day (6 October 2022).

Participants

The MSCA EJD Cluster Event brought together:

- Coordinators and project managers of ongoing European Joint Doctorates (EJD) projects funded under the Horizon 2020 programme (H2020), as well as three representatives from closed projects that have developed analysis/documents on their experience with an EJD project implementation;
- Representatives from the European Research Executive Agency (REA), the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG.EAC) and the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG.RTD).

In addition, the organisers invited National Contact Points (NCP) as well as alumni / doctoral candidates of EJD projects to benefit from their complementary perspective. Participants in the policy roundtable represented universities, researchers, national ministries and the EU. The event gathered around 130 participants, mainly coordinators and project managers from 57 ongoing EJD projects. Further details are available in the [EJD event webpage](#).

The event lasted a full day. It was composed of (1) four plenary presentations providing updated information about the EJD implementation and related initiatives, (2) two rounds of parallel sessions where the participants discussed the main implementation issues, (3) a plenary feedback session on these discussions, and (4) a plenary Round Table session where the points of views of the project coordinators, Universities, National authorities and policy makers (DG EAC) were exchanged. Further details are available in annex and in the [EJD event webpage](#).

The MSCA-EJD Cluster Event aimed to provide a networking opportunity to the stakeholders involved in the development of Joint Doctorates in Europe.

The present report provides inputs both for the current and future participants in Joint Doctorate projects through sharing best practices and experience, and for the policy unit DG.EAC that will use in particular the action points and recommendations as a basis to discuss the way forward with relevant stakeholders.

Indeed, the concept of joint doctorates cannot develop further without taking into account the key implementation aspects, and this is precisely a crucial element the conclusions of this event are contributing to.

Chapter 2 – Exchange of experience and good practices

The MSCA EJD Cluster Experts summarised the key messages identified by the participants.

1. Setting up joint degree governance structures

A mandatory requirement for EJDs is to have a joint governance structure with joint admission, selection, supervision, monitoring and assessment procedures. An important message from the workshop is that there is a need to start early with the establishment of the governance structures; ideally the main governance structure should be agreed upon as early as possible during proposal writing and clearly incorporated into the consortium agreement. This requires clear delegation of responsibilities to individual consortium members. It was deemed important that the project management office is empowered from the start to fully coordinate the project.

It was felt important to have sufficient time after the funding is awarded and before the start of the project, to set up and implement the critical governance structures of the consortium. However, this is not always possible.

Negotiations for consortium agreement with the non-academic participants require significant additional time and thought, given the greater scrutiny from their legal departments. It is also useful to align the project start date with the academic year of the participating institutions. The inclusion of non-academic partners in the Supervisory Boards is important to ensure full oversight over research progress.:

2. Recruitment of researchers

Joint Early Stage Researcher (ESR) recruitment is very much central to the joint degree concept. The recruitment of ESRs is currently considered a rather complex and lengthy procedure requiring thorough attention to an enormous number of details. That being the case, it should ideally be addressed as early as possible in the process to allow timely and smooth enrolment of the selected candidates. Thus, the recruitment process, if not well considered, is likely to generate uncertainties for applicant ESRs, individual host institutions, including faculty, scientists, and project management, as well as faculty administrations. Such uncertainties may cause severe delays and jeopardise the timely conduct of the programmes.

In the absence of a uniform EJD recruitment template, the main barrier in the recruitment phase is the diverse local and national regulations for PhD admission. There was unanimous agreement that a hybrid format, with a combination of centralised (at consortium level) and decentralised (at the level of the recruiting institution) modules, is the most suitable to achieve the recruitment goals for all stakeholders at a good pace.

It is absolutely critical that EJD consortia should proactively define and communicate transparent rules and procedures to guide the applying ESRs, and all participating partners and institutions, through the process. The steps and procedures relevant to all applicants and host sites should be organised centrally, where possible, to avoid parallel procedures and delays. Procedures that apply to the individual ESRs, and their respective host sites, should be organised in a decentralised manner to allow for optimal individual interaction at the personal interview. The process should ideally start with centralised initiation of the recruitment process under the auspices of the consortia Project management office (PMO) with dedicated staff to provide informative literature and handouts to all local project managers, scientists, ESR applicants, and affiliated universities. The purpose is to inform all ESR applicants, and putative hosting sites, as well as their faculty, of the diverse training plans available across the consortium, respective contractual details and statutory requirements of the enrolment at the various universities, as well as details on the possibility

of obtaining joint or multiple PhD degrees. To warrant uniform information for best guidance, materials should include descriptions of all individual ESR projects and expected ESR qualifications; description of all individual host sites including supervisors and faculty, description of all participating universities and their requirements for PhD enrolment, as well as visa/resident permit regulations for non-EU applicants. This centralised step will provide a pre-selection of potential ESR candidates to be verified by the Supervisory Board and participating scientists in a kick-off meeting. The decentralised interviewing (online format) of preselected ESR candidates at individual sites by local PM and scientists will allow sufficient time to the individual candidates and guide them towards several options to avoid non-eligibility and unnecessary drop out/rejection by universities. This is important, as it will redirect qualified candidates within the Consortium as early as possible. This step should provide a shortlist of qualified ESR candidates.

3. Enrolment of researchers in a PhD programme

It was generally agreed that university approval for the enrolment in a PhD programme and oral defense is a challenging procedure and a hurdle that frequently creates severe problems. Reasons are that candidate ESRs may present with different qualifications and/or formal requirements that are standard in their home countries but may not necessarily meet the requirements at their selected host university. Significant problems relating to legal and administrative frameworks include different countries having different regulations, bureaucracy bottlenecks and inflexibility with some national legal systems, and COVID-19. The process can be greatly complicated by enrollment starting at different times, applicants eventually declining offers and by local immigration requirements for non-EU students. Some countries legally require a Master's for PhD enrollment and not all European Masters have the same ECTS credit weighting. Some institutions require a subject-specific Master's. Language issues can often arise with documentation, thesis and defense especially when sufficient support services are not available to help applicants. Institutional PhD programme directors need to be in the loop from the outset. Some countries need ESRs to be present in person for enrolment, which was a significant issue during the COVID-19 pandemic. There is also the requirement in some countries to take all required courses locally (in the local language), which presents a significant hurdle.

Where there is a clear institutional requirement, only ESRs with a Second Cycle (Master's) qualification should be accepted into joint/double degree programmes. While qualification and selection criteria for EJD and individual ESR projects are addressed in the consortium recruitment procedure, it is important to be aware that the eligibility check for PhD enrolment is a local and independent procedure and may occur later in the process, sometimes after EJD recruitment. If problems arise at this stage, it can severely affect the ESR's career and even jeopardise the entire EJD programme. Also, as the eligibility check for PhD enrolment may only occur years after EJD programme enrolment, it is highly advisable that the ESRs submit at least a Research Declaration to the University.

Given these potential uncertainties, it is advisable that doctoral schools get involved as early as possible in the EJD ESR recruitment process. The PMO, local project managers and supervisors should act in concert to properly guide the ESRs through a smooth process that should include:

- Explanation of the ESRs' dual role of being contracted by the EJD host site versus being enrolled at the university to obtain a PhD degree.
- Provision of a defined list of formal requirements at individual universities by the central PMO (see above)
- Guidance for ESRs through the process by coordinators / recruitment committee / supervisors to warrant a timely, transparent and qualified PhD eligibility check.

Generally, it was agreed that it is good practice to share solutions and experiences related to enrollment by having better communication structures, e.g. bring together MCSA project managers to share experiences.

It was also suggested that there should be the possibility of checking local host legal requirements, in advance of recruiting ESRs, a procedure that needs to be better supported.

It was recognised that key university administration staff need a proper support structure to overcome legal and administrative framework constraints. Simple strategies to help overcome constraints, such as a communication flow table, were found useful for staff and ESRs. Again, it was considered that a broader European approach would be very helpful in dealing with these potential legal barriers. The importance of initially reaching out to top administrative staff levels was emphasised. According to some event participants, there was a seeming reluctance among administrative staff to engage with the joint/double degree process. Indeed, most universities are not familiar with these processes and quite often, finding the right person to talk to at a given institution can be problematic. Finally, the 6-month deadline to complete the joint/double degree agreement is seen as far too short.

4. The joint supervision process

Proper progress monitoring requires well-designed tailored procedures, as well as good oversight and strong steering from the EJD Supervisory Board to ensure fairness for the doctoral candidates. The Supervisory Board needs to ensure that the progression of milestones and evaluation steps between consortia partners are fair and aligned. It is proposed to have a dedicated review every 6/12 months to monitor the overall progress and not just research progress. A particular challenge related to monitoring is that different host institutions may have very different compulsory elements, or other progress requirements, for their PhD students. This may lead to increased workload on students to comply with different local regulations and reviews in addition to those for the EJD. It is also recognised that there have been COVID-19 challenges relating to well-being and settling in a new environment, all of which potentially had a significant effect on progress. A real challenge for monitoring relates to local rules for PhD completions (e.g., submit thesis within 3 years, expectations for the additional funding to cover the 4th year) and how to align monitoring across institutions in a fair way under these circumstances.

5. Secondments and summer schools

It was seen as very important to stress the benefits of the secondments and summer schools in terms of experience gained by the doctoral candidates, even if these events are relatively short. It is also seen as important to maintain frequent contact with doctoral candidates and their hosts during secondments. Ideally, it would be good to have a central budget for secondments and related activities, which is overseen by the Supervisory Board, to avoid fragmentation and ensure efficient spending. There was a positive recognition of the support given by REA/European Commission to tackle difficulties related to COVID-19, which was greatly appreciated. COVID-19 disruptions did require rescheduling and caused additional challenges for some secondments. In some cases, the systems were not sufficiently flexible to deal with this. Visa and other constraints, such as taxation requirements, vary between the countries and can affect progress.

Intellectual property issues and the need some time to go through new legal review processes led, in some cases, to the reduced willingness of the industrial partners to take on secondments, despite their initial promises. In the social sciences/humanities disciplines, some participants noted that industrial partners tended not to consider doctoral students as highly qualified potential employees. This will be studied and discussed in more detail, as well as whether it also occurs in other disciplines. Additionally, changes in the profiles and/or priorities of some companies over the period from application to the project start, made it challenging to accommodate the originally planned secondments. Finally, in some cases, conflicts between the periods required by each academic partner to award a joint/double

degree had some negative impacts on the placements, especially their duration. In some cases, private sector secondments, coupled with dividing their time between the two Ph.D. awarding institutions, generated overload, and significant pressure for some doctoral candidates.

6. Project communication and dissemination including collaboration with the non-academic sector

Doctoral candidates involved in EJD projects were very effective in working together while promoting the communication activities of the consortium, especially those activities involving communication through social networks. EJD programmes enjoy significant visibility, which improves their communication activities, and gives the ESRs the opportunity to further enhance their communication skills. However, it was also noted, that in some cases, the project coordinators of EJD networks had to make significant efforts to mobilise institutional communication resources. The involvement of doctoral candidates in communication activities tends to decrease towards the end of the project, as they understandably appeared to lose interest in communication activities when getting close to graduation time.

Overall collaboration with the non-academic sector, and the exploitation of project results, has been significantly enabled by the H2020 programme, and it was largely agreed that it would be very useful if this trend continued in Horizon Europe. While collaboration with the non-academic sector is effective in the research and training events of EJD programmes, occasional difficulties were not uncommon during the exploitation of project results, e.g., beneficiaries having divergent views on IP and potential exploitation. In particular, it was noted that partners from social sciences often had difficulties finding private sector partners

7. PhD degree types

It has been pointed out that there is not yet an established, universal trust in the joint degree concept within the European tertiary education sector (some universities may even have very limited experience with international students). A major obstacle often arises at the level of issuing the diploma, as there is no predefined template or signature procedure for the formalisation of multiple/joint diplomas. There is an agreement that joint or multiple doctoral degree templates should not be arranged by individual institutions but must be arranged nationally, and ideally at the EU level. Accordingly, a framework is required to clarify how joint/multiple degrees can be facilitated and how this will be formally documented.

Being a critical aspect, it is recommended to start the process of creating alliances for joint and multiple degrees early in the EJD process in order to check the compatibility between potential European/international university partners. A possible framework should be explored as early as during the proposal preparation phase to consider the different rules in EU member and non-member states. It was proposed that a common memorandum for agreement among universities should be signed by rectors to serve as a foundation, based on which a template for joint degrees can be created. However, as the accreditation of a joint doctorate may take years to be agreed among participating universities, it may be more realistic, for better recognition and acceptance, to award doctoral candidates with double/multiple degrees, in the meantime.

Joint degrees were generally perceived by the organisations participating in the event as more desirable than double degrees, but the double degree model is seen, by far, as the easiest option to implement. The double degree model also better aligns with universities' existing expectations; they prefer awarding their own diplomas. Some participants understood, however, that some employers see a double degree as a 'two for the price of one' model and question its legitimacy. It was felt that it would be useful to get data from doctoral candidates to examine the advantages/disadvantages of both degree models.

The importance of the *Diploma Supplement*, a complete academic record of a PhD, was stressed. In particular, for interdisciplinary joint degrees, the *Diploma Supplement* can describe the acquired knowledge/competencies. The awarding of a Joint degree takes a lot more administrative effort, so there is a real need to consider the effort/reward ratio when considering joint degrees. The main problem with joint degrees, issued as a single diploma, primarily relates to the different grading/award systems from the contributing institutions. Also, quite often, the advantages of joint degrees are not obvious to university administrations.

There was consensus on the severe issues that currently arise from the lack of clear, uniform, and legally binding formats on a joint PhD awarding procedure. Processes and related wording have not been standardised so far, which frequently causes confusion. Moreover, within universities, the definition of a “joint doctorate” remains unclear and therefore may result in time-consuming admission/approval procedures. This lag may put the doctoral candidates at risk of running out of financial support, as the lifetime of the approved project is limited, but the joint PhD degree award may be severely delayed and even uncertain. To ease this situation, it is therefore advisable for the EJD consortium to take preemptive measures at the level of the Consortium Agreement to warrant recognition of the planned EJD joint degrees by a document signed by all Rectors of the participating universities. This way, a unique EJD joint degree programme is defined and agreed upon across the consortium with all credits being acknowledged by each PhD school. It was felt that a single PhD defense is the best option, as some projects allow the doctoral candidate to select the examining institution.

8. Doctoral candidates' careers

The participants in the EJD event shared the opinions that the increased input from multiple research environments, and the multicultural exposure offered in a joint degree programme clearly increase the number and quality of the skills acquired by the doctoral candidates, as well as help them better adapt to ever-changing work environments. This in turn greatly enhances their employability. Their career prospects are further improved with the potential for increased and more effective networking. The joint/double PhD can further improve these career prospects as they are recognised in more countries since the level of education, and the degree, is sometimes better or more easily recognised.

In terms of proper career planning and development for the doctoral candidate, the Career Development Plan (CDP) was seen as an essential document and process. It was accepted that all supervisors need to sign off on the CDPs and keep industrial partners involved and updated in CDPs. It is important to allocate the industrial mentors early on and make students fully aware how they will benefit from the exposure to the non-academic environments. There should be an expectation that supervisors stimulate students to think about their careers, particularly focusing on this aspect in their final year. The aim should be to make CDPs uniform and of the same standard for all ESRs. It is also important to keep and develop them as live documents, capturing all the core activities throughout the ESR contract.

9. Creating lasting impact(s)

According to the EJD participants' experience, the participation in EJD programmes has markedly increased collaborations and partnership building when compared to other ITN implementation modes. This has had positive effects on the quality of individual University programmes. EJDs are therefore very useful catalysts for building long-lasting collaborations and sustainable joint educational programmes. ESRs participating in EJD programmes were, generally, very happy with the exposure to the diversity of different host environments. This positive ESR experience should be captured to serve as a motivator to further enhance joint degree programmes.

Chapter 3 – Feedback and recommendations for policy

The feedback and recommendations are organised according to the organisational level it is considered of most interest.

1. Projects

It was considered useful to get data from doctoral candidates to examine the benefits of both joint and double degree models. In order to make the qualitative feedback fully meaningful and quantitative, a comparison with non-EJD PhD students and their careers/graduate outcomes would need to be measured. In addition, the surveys should be more subject specific. Overall, there is a need to develop governance, recruitment, and implementation protocols at consortium level to ensure fairness for the doctoral candidates across different member institutions; more oversight and strong management are required from the EJD Supervisory Boards.

Quite a few contributors expressed the view that the recruitment under the EJD funding duration (36 months) is far too short. Similarly, considering the time and resources investment made by institutions, there should be the possibility of multi-generational programmes that build on the accumulated experience of earlier project generations. Separately, the value of creating a network of previous EJD project coordinators was clearly emphasised for passing on knowledge and exchanging experience and good practice.

2. Universities

It has been pointed out that universal trust in the joint degree model has not yet been fully established. To help improve this situation, it is advisable for EJD consortia to take preemptive measures when constructing the Consortium Agreement to ensure recognition of the planned EJD joint degrees. This would need to be formally signed off by all the relevant authorities of the participating universities. The role of university administration staff is central to all of this, they need a proper framework/support structure to help with EJD implementation. The use of the *Diploma Supplement* can be extended and help address issues related to the need to describe interdisciplinary degree programmes. In terms of communication and outreach, there need to be a concerted effort to engage institutional communication departments over the life of joint degree programmes.

3. Private sector

Negotiations for consortium agreement with the non-academic participants require time and thought, given the increased influence from their legal departments. This needs to be fully recognised and accepted and project work plans adjusted accordingly. Collaboration with the private sector, and the exploitation of the project results, was facilitated by the H2020, and there was strong support for this trend to be continued in Horizon Europe.

Collaboration with the private sector is generally effective in the research and training events of EJD programs. However, difficulties were not uncommon during subsequent exploitation of project results. These difficulties could be mitigated if intellectual property protocols are clearly defined and agreed upon when consortium agreements are being finalised.

4. Local, national, international levels

A centralised approach, with a common programme template that addresses admission, supervision, monitoring, assessment procedures, examination and awarding of degrees

would be very helpful for dealing with legal and cultural barriers and inflexibilities associated with national systems. There are also issues with legal recognition of some joint degree certificates in some countries, where often inflexible local regulations do not allow for reciprocal alignment among countries within the EU and internationally. There is also a need to encourage and incentivise local/institutional support for EJD implementation. This is critical for the successful implementation of any joint degree programme. National authorities need to provide flexibility to universities to implement EJDs and provide clarity as to which rules are mandated nationally and which are mandated by universities.

5. The EU (e.g. European Degree and European Universities initiative)

It is generally accepted that a unified European Degree model would be very useful in setting the minimum quality standards for the degree award. Despite the potentially negative effect of increased bureaucracy, the European Degree initiative would enhance the standardisation among PhD programmes. The value of a European degree was acknowledged, both at the level of ESRs for better access to job markets, and at the level of institutions for establishing a common joint/multiple PhD standard that offers the potential to bring people and institutions closer together.

It was particularly noted that it might potentially strengthen the links between central/eastern and western European universities. If implemented, the European Degree with a single 'set of rules', would solve a lot of administrative issues. Many instruments (through the Bologna Process) are already in place and will need to be used more. It was also felt that such a European Degree model would motivate and reward institutions to commit to implementing protocols for joint degree programmes.

There is still no clear understanding of the exact nature of the European Degree, or how it would be awarded. Given the current lack of formal definitions and the uncertainties attached to it, it was felt that the administrative and legal part is still too challenging for individual institutions to award such joint/multiple degrees. It was felt that a European Degree would certainly require the creation of a formal accreditation agency. It would be essential for a template to be defined at the EU level: a template with universal acceptance and validity in each member state. It is also recognised that it would be very difficult for universities to push political/administration leaders to move on this proposal, which would, in itself, be a significant challenge. It was noted that there may be a need to rethink the terminology around such a degree. It may well be possible that the term "European Degree" might lead to misunderstandings, e.g., some might think either that EU will be directly involved in its awarding, or that it is a doctoral degree solely for Europeans with non-Europeans being excluded. It was remarked that there should not be too many constraints put on participating institutions, especially on those from outside the EU. The view was also expressed that in many cases the actual reputation of the awarding university is perceived as often being more important than a European Degree label or brand.

Finally, it was noted that it is likely that the European joint degree would be piloted as a quality label. This could and should allow the degree model to be linked with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, published in 2015.

The European Universities initiative is another example of an EU-wide action that contributes to improving structured transnational collaboration including the facilitation of all steps towards joint degrees from admission to awarding and recognition.

Chapter 4 – Meeting conclusions

1. Summary of the outcomes

There was widespread consensus during the event that the joint degree model offers an opportunity to researchers to collaborate in a structured way with other European (and non-European) groups, while embedding a multidisciplinary approach to research which ultimately leads to obtaining better research and better doctoral training in general. This in turn leads to significantly better career opportunities for the doctoral candidates, making them more attractive to the private and public sectors. Joint degree programmes also raise the international profile of host institutions, an increasingly important benefit for universities as it improves their opportunities to secure funding in an increasingly competitive environment. As a degree programme model, it offers a more structured collaboration among partner institutions. This allows for the building of long-lasting research networks that are of benefit to everyone involved. As such, Joint doctorates are strategic for the EU as a powerful driver towards the structuring of the EHEA and the ERA.

While local legal systems and protocols are certainly a challenge to the establishment and implementation of joint degree programmes, there is a need to support and encourage universities across the EU to take a more flexible, pragmatic approach. Universities have the potential to reshape their rules to be more flexible so far as national legislation delegates such power to them. Therefore, a 'bottom up' approach to reducing inter-institutional barriers is the most likely route to successfully overcome these obstacles in the short term. However, there is also a need for a more centralised role, at EU level, to help in aligning rules and regulations at a local institutional level. Institutions will need guidance and support and the EU might be best placed to deliver this.

2. Recommendations and future directions

While the event advanced many recommendations and examples of good practice (detailed in Chapter 3 of this report), this section focuses on a few recommendations that are concrete, actionable, and realistic in the short to mid-term.

Two policy specific recommendations have been identified:

- **Encourage EU Member States and countries associated to Horizon Europe to adapt and better communicate their legislation that governs joint doctorates:** Event participants advocated for having national authorities granting flexibility to universities to set the requirements for joint doctorates. There are cases where it is not clear what is mandated by the state and what is mandated by the institution and in this case, national administration can play an important role in providing clarity.
- **Integrate the perspectives on joint doctorates gained during this event in the ongoing policy discussions on the European Degree while this initiative is being shaped:** Paving the way for achieving the European Degree would involve taking down some important barriers to structured transnational collaboration in higher education. This would *de facto* address several of the joint doctorate barriers addressed by this event. Channelling the event's output in the ongoing policy discussions on the European Degree would ensure that the EJD experience is valorised and taken into account for a policy outcome that is effective in facilitating future joint doctorates.

And three action specific recommendations are proposed:

- **Provision of information through seminars and info days:** The event revealed a clear deficit in information at various levels. Programme coordinators struggle to understand institutional, national and transnational requirements. Doctoral candidates need more guidance on the rules for admission and recruitment. Universities' administrative offices often lack familiarity with Joint doctorates.
- **Establish and enable a network of former and current coordinators of joint doctorate programmes:** This event in itself was a clear demonstration of the added value a network of programme coordinators would bring. Towards the end of a joint doctorate project, a coordinator will have accumulated valuable experience on how to tackle administrative obstacles for example. There is clear merit in passing on this experience to newer coordinators.
- **A coordinators day is organised with regard to each call for proposals.** While emphasis is given to inform project representatives about the provisions of the Grant Agreement and the corresponding rights and obligations, this coordinators day also serves as an opportunity for networking between the new coordinators and the REA Project Officers.

A further cluster event for Joint Doctorates projects will be considered for mid-term of the Horizon Europe programme in order to take stock of developments since the first EJD cluster event.

Useful links

- ❖ [Commission Communication | Strategy for European Universities](#)
- ❖ [Council Conclusions on the European Universities initiative](#)
- ❖ [CORDIS | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)
- ❖ [Erasmus+ | EU programme for education, training, youth and sport \(europa.eu\)](#)
- ❖ [European Joint Doctorates: myth or reality?](#)
- ❖ [European Open Science Cloud](#)
- ❖ [Funding & tenders \(europa.eu\)](#)
- ❖ [Implementing joint degrees in the Erasmus Mundus action of the Erasmus+ programme](#)
- ❖ [Marie Curie Alumni Association \(MCAA\)](#)
- ❖ [MSCA Actions | Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions \(europa.eu\)](#)
- ❖ [European Research Executive Agency](#)

Annex: Meeting format and content

The event took place online on 9 November 2021 and lasted from 09:30 to 17:00.

The event was composed of:

- **Four plenary presentations tackling different topics :**
 - o The results of the survey on EJD projects
 - o The current EJD portfolio;
 - o The state of play of the ongoing study on the European degree and its possible way forward;
 - o The best practices and lessons learnt from prior experience of two EJD projects
- **Two rounds of parallel sessions:**

During each round, the participants discussed one of the following topics:

 - o How to sign a joint/double doctorate agreement in 6 months?
 - o Secrets for a quality doctoral training and excellent supervision;
 - o How to achieve and strengthen the impact of joint doctorates?
 - o From recruitment to evaluation: how to jointly deal with the procedures?

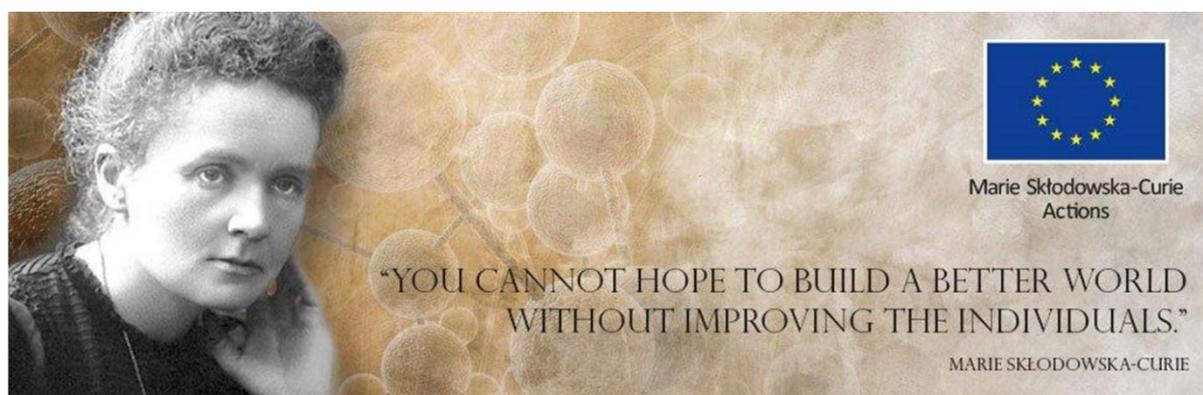
Each participant had the opportunity to join two of these sessions during the two successive rounds. Each session was moderated by a project coordinator and a rapporteur gathered the different inputs and presented them during the plenary feedback session.
- **A plenary feedback session:**

The rapporteurs of the parallel sessions presented the outputs of the parallel session discussions for each of the four topics.
- **A plenary Round Table session:**

DG EAC organised and moderated this session which was structured around two main questions:

 - o What is the added value of Joint Doctorates?
 - o What could be done to surmount the obstacles associated with their implementation?

Participants were a EJD project coordinator, a representative of the European University Association, an advisor to the French ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, and a representative of DG EAC.



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