



Project acronym:
DocTalent4EU

Project title:
“Transforming Europe Through Doctoral Talent and Skills Recognition”

Grant agreement No: 101095292
Project funded by the European Union
within the Horizon Europe Programme

Start date of project: 1 January 2023
Duration: 24 months

Deliverable No 6.2

Report I on outcomes of first round table

Due date of deliverable	31/01/2023	
Submission date	31/01/2023	
File Name	D6.2_Report I on outcomes of first round table	
Organisation Responsible of Deliverable	European University Foundation (EUF)	
Author name(s)	Federica Bartolozzi	
Revision number	1	
Status	Final	
Dissemination Level	PU ¹	
Approved (coordinator)	31/01/2023	Auréa Cophignon

¹ PU: Public, SEN: Sensitive



Revision History			
Version	Date	Modified by	Comments
1.1	27/01/2023	Federica Bartolozzi	First draft
1.2	30/01/2023	Aur�a Cophignon	Added comments to first draft
1.3	30/01/2023	Federica Bartolozzi, Isabel Catarino	Incorporated comments in draft (F.B.), proofread (I.C.).
1.4	28/02/2023	Aur�a Cophignon	Updated EU logo, Disclaimer and Copyright. Added project logo

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This document has been submitted to the European Commission but is still under approval.

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Agenda

Title: Improving training and career progression of doctoral candidates

Date and time: January 18th, 2023, 10:00-12:00 CET

Location: online (Zoom)

Registered participants: 81

Participants attending the event: 54 (excluding speakers and panellists)

Agenda and invited speakers:

Session and topic	Speaker(s)
European policy context of doctoral training <i>Keynote presentation</i>	Dario Capezuto <i>Policy Officer</i> <i>European Commission, DG RTD, R&I Actors and Research Careers</i>
DocEnhance: Broadening PhD expertise through transferable skills <i>Session I - insights from EU projects</i>	Michaela Aschan <i>Professor in Fisheries, Biology and management</i> <i>UiT The Arctic University of Norway</i>
Doctalent4EU <i>Session I - insights from EU projects</i>	Aur�a Cophignon <i>Project Manager</i> <i>Project Coordinator of DocTalent4EU</i> <i>Universit� C�te d'Azur</i>
The PhDHub platform <i>Session I - insights from EU projects</i>	Joachim Wyssling <i>Deputy Executive Manager</i> <i>European University Foundation</i>
Panel discussion <i>Session II - Doctoral training and career development: challenges and opportunities</i>	Nicola Dengo <i>Postdoctoral Researcher</i> <i>Universit� degli Studi dell'Insubria</i> <i>General Board Member and Skills Officer</i> <i>European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers (Eurodoc)</i> Erik Kyrkjeb� <i>Associate Professor, Head of HVL Robotics research group</i> <i>Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (HVL)</i> Gabriella Kassa <i>Department head of the ELTE Career Centre</i> <i>E�tv�s Lor�nd University</i> Nikos Giannoulidis <i>Director of Innovation Services</i> <i>Euroconsultants S.A.</i> Maria Elena Iglesias Pi�eiro <i>Senior Scientist Formulation Development & Pilot Plant</i> <i>Berlimed S.A. Product Supply, Bayer Consumer Health</i>

Aim of event

The aim of this event was twofold:

- familiarise the audience with recent policy and project developments in the field of doctoral training and career development;
- gather feedback on the challenges and actions needed to improve training and career development for candidates, so as to equip them with the necessary competencies and skills to find employment both within and outside academia. The insights gathered during the panel session will be used to refine and improve the objectives and activities of the Horizon project DocTalent4EU, which started on January 1st, 2023.

Keynote presentation and session I: Insights from EU projects

The keynote presentation started with a description of the main challenges that researchers face, such as precarious working conditions and uncertainty about possible career paths outside academia. To tackle these issues, the European Commission (EC) has put forward a series of EU policy initiatives and tools aimed at improving PhD candidates' training/awareness of skills and increasing collaborations and opportunities beyond academia, including:

- *EU framework for research careers*: a document summarising the input gathered by the EC on how to address some of the challenges faced by researchers and facilitate cross-sectoral mobility;
- *ESCO*: classification of European Skills, Competences, and Occupations. It contains a taxonomy of skills and occupations for researchers;
- *ResearchComp*: a tool outlining seven competency areas relevant for researchers. The tool can be used: 1) by PhD candidates and researchers to self-assess their competences and skills gaps, 2) by institutions, to develop training programmes, 3) by employers, to better understand the competences that researchers can offer;
- *ERA talent platform*: an online platform encompassing various services, such as a database of training resources, and links to Europass and EURES.

The keynote speech was followed by a presentation of the results and/or plans of three EU-funded projects focused on improving skills training and career development for PhD candidates.

DocEnhance: this H2020 project (2020-2022) aimed at improving both the transferable skills training for PhD candidates and the cooperation with the non-academic sector. The project developed:

- [three open-access courses](#) on selected transferable skills (Data Stewardship, Career Management and Entrepreneurship, Supervision);
- a [career-tracking survey](#) to monitor career paths of PhD holders after graduation;
- a [platform](#) for dissemination of open-access training resources.



DocTalent4EU: this Horizon Europe project (2023-2024) plans to complement and expand the results of DocEnhance by:

- improving skills intelligence efforts to assess relevant transversal skills for researchers both within and outside academia;
- piloting a digital credential scheme for better recognition of the skills earned during the PhD;
- piloting career development centres and related services for better career planning from the early onset of doctoral training.

PhDHub portal: [online portal](#) initially developed as part of a Knowledge Alliance project (2017-2019) and then updated as part of DocEnhance and DocTalent4EU. The portal centralises different types of opportunities for researchers (including but not limited to courses, internships, job offers, and funding opportunities).

Session II: Doctoral training and career development: challenges and opportunities

Session I was followed by a panel discussion where five invited speakers from the academic and non-academic sector shared their insights on how universities can improve skills training and career development for PhD candidates. In particular, the session revolved around the challenges that PhD holders face when entering the job market and possible solutions on how to overcome them:

- **Uncertainty about career opportunities and relevant skills beyond academia**

Often, PhD holders are not aware of the range of careers that they can pursue, nor do they have a full understanding of the range of skills that they can apply in jobs outside of the non-academic sector. At the same time, employers from the non-academic sectors may not be familiar with the range of competences of PhD holders and the added value that they can provide. To better support PhD holders during and after their training, universities should:

- inform PhD candidates about the likelihood of pursuing an academic career/obtaining a tenure-track position and showcase possible paths from the early stages of a PhD, both within and outside academia. This helps PhD candidates to better plan their training and integrate skills relevant for specific positions early on during their doctorate;
 - promote the acquisition and recognition of transversal skills through structured training, for instance leading to the award of ECTS credits or digital credentials. This is beneficial to both PhD candidates and employers from the non-academic sector, as it allows a clear evaluation of the PhD candidates' skillset.
- **Lack of exposure to the non-academic sector and difficult transition to the non-academic sector**

The speakers highlighted that PhD candidates do not necessarily have access to professional networks outside of academia. This makes it difficult to search for relevant jobs, and adjust to a non-academic environment, as often the requirements, skills, and ways of working in the academic and non-academic sectors vary. To increase the exposure to the non-academic sector, several structures and initiatives were discussed, such as:



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- promoting supervision from industry representatives, since this helps to highlight relevant skills for specific profiles and creates role models for the candidates;
- offering traineeships in the non-academic sector and/or encouraging public dissemination of research activities, as this encourages candidates to think of how their research and skills translate to real-world settings;
- inviting representatives from the non-academic sector to seminars and events, and organising visits to companies to increase networking opportunities.