

## **Doctoral studies in Greece within the European Higher Education Area: convergences and challenges**

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### **Abstract**

*Doctoral training in Europe (EHEA) is changing from a highly individualized model based on the interpersonal relationship between supervisor and doctoral student (apprenticeship model) to a new form linking university and the economy. At the same time, the 3d cycle is being re-structured. This paper raises the question of whether Greece is following and adapting to these developments. The methodology used is a comparative analysis of policy texts at both the European and Greek levels. Official documents at the EU level and documents produced in the framework of the Bologna process have been analyzed. As far as Greece is concerned, the analysis was carried out on two levels: At the national level, we followed the evolution of legislation and examined the changes at the institutional-legislative level. We have also focused on the case of the University of Patras, where we emphasized the PhD Regulations of the Institution and those of the Departments according to the provisions of the most recent law (Law 4957/2022). The results of the study indicate that Greece is linking 3rd cycle training to industry and the economy. It is also moving towards the establishment of a structured doctoral program of study. However, this transition is not uniform at all levels. Differences do exist at both institutional and departmental levels. However, what remains unchanged is the strong relationship between supervisor and doctoral student.*

### **Keywords**

*Doctoral studies, University, comparative approach.*

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## **1. Introduction**

The doctorate has a long and interesting history (Park, 2007). The earliest form of the doctorate emerged in medieval Europe, where it was awarded in recognition of one's ability to teach, rather than one's ability to research<sup>5</sup>. It was some 600 years later that the University of Berlin introduced a research-only doctorate, where the degree was awarded in recognition of the student's competence and ability in research. This format then mitigated to the USA when the first doctorate was awarded at Yale in 1861, to Canada in 1897 and finally to the UK when Oxford University awarded its first Doctor of Philosophy (DPhil) in 1917 (Jones, 2018; Park, 2007). The purpose of the PhD (research doctorate) was, subsequently, to prepare students for academic careers. The model of study polarized into two basic forms. The US model involved students undertaking advanced coursework in content areas related to the chosen fields of study, followed by a short research component and a dissertation supervised by a course committee. In the British model, students engaged in individual research and writing to produce a substantial monograph, supported by the expert guidance of a principal academic supervisor with experience in the field of study. The emphasis in both models was on the development of disciplinary knowledge that was refined and focused on the art, rather than on the application of research and the transfer of knowledge to practitioners (Park 2007).

The specific format, the objective, and the research orientation of doctoral studies have remained unchanged throughout modernity, for almost 200 years. Today, however, the entire structure and content of doctoral studies is subject to change in light of the multiple agendas at work and the multiple stakeholders<sup>6</sup> involved (Park, 2007). The latter include students, supervisors, academic departments and institutions, disciplines, funding bodies<sup>7</sup>, employers and governments themselves (Park, 2007). With regard to the former, important issues include (global competition for) the supply of doctoral students<sup>8</sup>, the need for internationally competitive doctoral programs, improving the compatibility of studies in the context of the third cycle of the Bologna Process, adapting to the Lisbon

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<sup>5</sup> The term doctorate in Latin *licentia docendi* means license to teach (Jones, 2018).

<sup>6</sup> Students, Supervisors, Academic Departments & Institutions, Disciplines, Funding Bodies, Employers, the Nation (Park, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> The funding of doctoral training is mixed in varying proportions between national funders, university employment, contributions from the non-academic sector and self-funding, which is also reflected in a wide variety of statuses (EUA-CDE, 2022).

<sup>8</sup> Related issues include recruitment, funding, efficiency and cost-effectiveness, and the status of researchers.

objectives, and the provisions of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers<sup>9</sup> (Park, 2007). Increased public investment in doctoral training because of the new priorities for the third cycle and the link between the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the European Research Area (ERA) has led to an increase in the number of doctoral graduates (Germain-Alamartine et al., 2021; Vasilopoulos & Giotakou, 2022). Nevertheless, they have also created a problem. Traditionally, the priority for doctoral graduates has been to secure a tenure-track academic position. In recent years, however, few have succeeded. As a result, more and more PhDs are looking for employment outside academia. Today, about a third of doctoral graduates pursue academic careers; the rest are employed in a variety of jobs, mainly in the business, government, and non-profit sectors (Germain-Alamartine et al., 2021; Germain-Alamartine & Moghadam-Saman, 2020; Jones, 2018; Park, 2007). The labor market for PhDs has changed significantly over the 20th century, and as opportunities for academic employment have declined, the market for PhDs has broadened and increasingly professional PhDs have emerged (Vasilopoulos & Giotakou, 2022).

In this context, after referring to the developments concerning doctoral studies at the European level, we will focus on our country. Using University of Patras, as a case study, we are going to analyze the relative regulatory framework in Greece and its implementation at the university. Finally, through the comparative analysis of policy texts, we are interested in investigating the extent to which recent developments in doctoral studies at the national (Greece) and sub-national (the case of the University of Patras) levels are coordinated/follow the corresponding developments at the European level.

## **2. Doctoral Studies in Europe**

As mentioned above, the early version of the doctorate has evolved. In recent history, it has evolved along two lines<sup>10</sup>. Along one line, the more contemporary form has persisted,

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<sup>9</sup>The European Charter for Researchers, and a Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers are designed to help make research a more attractive career and increase mobility by giving researchers the same rights and responsibilities across Europe. The Charter defines the roles, responsibilities and entitlements of researchers and their employers or funding organizations. The Code aims to improve recruitment and to make selection procedures fairer and more transparent, and it proposes different means of judging merit (Park, 2007).

<sup>10</sup> Our references below focus on developments in the content of doctoral studies. There is, however, another issue that concerns the delivery of doctoral studies, and particularly the possibility of co-supervision, i.e.

and the doctorate continues to serve as the basic degree for entry into university as an academic, and certainly as a compulsory route to tenure in most universities. However, a second, more recent adaptation of the PhD, known as the professional doctorate, “*has risen from the ashes of history to find a very comfortable and viable place in contemporary society*” (Jones, 2018, p. 814). Professional doctoral programs have two main characteristics.

On the one hand, their intended outcome is to make an original contribution to professional practice and/or policy through research. On the other hand, they involve structured (sometimes referred to as “taught”), supervised and cohort-based experiences, with an emphasis on candidates acquiring research skills that can be used in their professional practice<sup>11</sup> (European University Association (EUA), 2016; Robinson, 2018). The Taught Doctorate, the Practice Based Doctorate, the New Route PhD and the Industrial Doctorate, among others, are new forms of doctoral education, linking the university and industry more systematically<sup>12</sup> (Bao et al., 2018; Vasilopoulos & Giotakou, 2022).

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international collaboration, in the context of a doctoral thesis. Over the last two decades, universities have paid increasing attention to the issue of *cotutelles*, which has led to a rapid spread in European universities. *Cotutelles de thèse* originated in France in the 1990s. At the time of its creation, this type of cooperation aimed to establish and develop scientific cooperation between French and foreign institutions by promoting the international mobility of doctoral candidates. A cotutelle is a doctoral degree awarded to an individual doctoral candidate following an agreement, usually between two higher education institutions and generally from different countries, which certifies the award of a doctoral degree in each scientific field (not necessarily with the same title) and allows the candidate to develop the doctoral research project during alternating stays at the partner institutions. The doctoral candidate is academically supervised by at least two supervisors, one from each institution. To formalize this type of collaboration, a written agreement will be signed by the representatives of these institutions, setting out all the necessary conditions and legal norms to be respected in accordance with the regulations in force by the parties involved. If the candidate fulfils all the degree requirements, including a single thesis and a single defense, recognized by both institutions, the parties will award their respective degrees, either in the form of a single document or in two documents with explicit reference to each other. In this case, the candidate may choose to use one of the degrees awarded. A joint doctorate, on the other hand, refers to a joint doctoral program for a cohort of doctoral candidates run jointly by two or more institutions. A joint doctorate promotes integrated international doctoral collaboration that benefits from the educational and research strengths of each partner and reduces the impact of the shortcomings of any one partner (Borrell-Damian et al., 2015; EUA, 2022).

<sup>11</sup> The proliferation of titles of professional doctorate awards and programs, and inconsistencies between the various programs, has resulted in a lack of clear articulation and understanding in terms of what professional doctorates are, the theoretical and methodological contribution they make, and the value they add to professional practice (Robinson, 2018).

<sup>12</sup>In 2017/2018, EUA-CDE published a survey report that provided several insights into the current landscape of doctoral education in Europe. It confirmed that in around three-quarters of universities doctoral education is organized in programs with specific elements such as taught courses, milestones, and mobility options. In six out of ten universities doctoral education is managed through an organizational unit, the “doctoral school” which, among other things, oversees the development of programs, ensures quality, and develops regulations and guidelines. For 10% of institutions, doctoral education is organized jointly with other universities. Only 5% of European institutions declared that their doctoral education functions without institutional oversight. For many this means that what was previously an exclusive

The EUA project Promoting Collaborative Doctoral Education for Enhanced Career Opportunities (DOC-CAREERS II) examined how universities work with their business and other non-university partners to set up and take forward doctoral research projects<sup>13</sup>. This report points to the existence of a variety of collaborative models, shaped by the characteristics of the research project, the profile of the university and the company, and the regional context. It shows that the establishment of university-business partnerships is based on the proximity of the different partners (e.g. geographical proximity, common language), a shared understanding of the regional context and the existence of appropriate policies and legal frameworks, all of which are important elements in the development and maintenance of successful partnerships. There is no one-size-fits-all model for collaborative doctoral training. Rather, the results of the project have shown a variety of successful models emerging from both top-down and bottom-up levels. The project results indicate the existence of a variety of collaborative models, shaped by the characteristics of the research project, the profile of the university and the company, and the regional context. They also highlight the importance of having committed stakeholders (academic and company supervisors, doctoral candidates) with the right skills profile to take the collaboration forward. In addition, the careful planning of the doctoral program, the development of trust-based relationships between all partners, and the enhanced employability of doctoral graduates who are "bilingual" in the academic and business sectors were some of the elements of collaborative doctoral training perceived as most relevant by stakeholders (Borrell-Damian et al., 2015).

This reference brings us to the contemporary debate on doctoral studies in Europe, as conducted by the European University Association (EUA), which has been given the responsibility to take forward the European discussion on doctoral studies<sup>14</sup> (Park, 2007). The EUA identifies ten points that summarize the current debate on doctoral studies:

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relation between supervisors and supervisee has de facto become a partnership between supervisors, doctoral candidate, and the institution (EUA-CDE, 2022).

<sup>13</sup> DOC-CAREERS II (2009-2012) builds on the first DOC-CAREERS project (2006-2009) and has sought not only to further test and validate the main results of the first project, but also to extend them by analyzing the importance of the regional dimension of collaborative doctoral education and by involving universities, their business partners, and doctoral candidates, with a view to collect "full stories" of the collaborative doctoral experience. These "full stories" focused on the whole breadth of aspects related to collaborative doctoral education, from its inception to the employability of doctorate holders.

<sup>14</sup> In fact, as early as 2005, the final report of the Doctoral Programs Project (European University Association, 2005) helped the European Universities Association to define ten 'Salzburg principles' (agreed during the 2005 Salzburg seminar) including, amongst other things, the principle of defining and treating doctoral candidates as early stage researchers, and the principle that, while the advancement of knowledge through original research should be the core component of doctoral training, doctoral training must increasingly meet the needs of an employment market that is wider than academia. The same themes are

- i. Create doctoral schools that serve as a place where the opportunities and challenges of new digital technologies are embraced in the pursuit of research goals and their own enabling frameworks.
- ii. The Sustainable Development Goals are seen as a holistic framework that provides a context for and supports the delivery of doctoral education.
- iii. Research and teaching in the third cycle should contribute to solving the environmental, demographic, socio-economic and political challenges facing Europe and the world.
- iv. Doctoral studies should be sensitive to the different backgrounds - social, economic, and cultural - that doctoral candidates bring with them, to foster the diversity that goes hand in hand with excellence.
- v. Doctoral programs should promote dialogue on the different dimensions of academic freedoms and raise awareness of where they are at risk.
- vi. Doctoral education needs to embrace the variety of formats that have emerged while ensuring that core principles, including the importance of original research, remain integral to all of them.
- vii. Quality assurance in doctoral education should include an understanding of core skills and values such as research ethics and integrity, and the adoption of a critical approach to research evaluation that is not limited to publication metrics.
- viii. Doctoral students need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to meet the modern demands of research and to pursue their chosen career paths. At the same time, they need to map, visualize, verbalize, and communicate their skills to others. Doctoral training should develop both implicit and explicit skills. Transversal skills should not be seen as an add-on but as a key element of the doctorate while maintaining the essential role of original research as the key feature of doctoral education.

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also echoed in the Glasgow Declaration which was adopted by EUA Council in April 2005 (Robinson, 2018). The ongoing reform process in doctoral education was taken forward in 2010 via the Salzburg II - Recommendations, a seminal document that provided additional content and guidelines for a diverse landscape of doctoral schools and programs (EUA-CDE, 2022). Before and after the publication of the Salzburg I & II Recommendations in 2010, further important developments were launched with the EUA as the main protagonist, culminating in the establishment of the European University Association Council for Doctoral Education (EUA-CDE) in 2008. Later in 2016, after surveying 200 universities from 39 countries, EUA published *Taking Salzburg Forward*, identifying new challenges for doctoral education: digitalization has enabled the development of open research, open education and social media; standards for training in research integrity and ethics are urgently required; and research has become increasingly global (European University Association (EUA), 2016).

- ix. Supervision is crucial and universities should invest in the training of supervisors to enable them to fully embrace their role and to ensure that the doctoral school or environment plays its appropriate supportive role.
- x. The level of living support for doctoral students, is linked to the attractiveness of careers and incomes of early career knowledge workers in other sectors and ultimately to the funding of doctoral studies (EUA-CDE, 2022, p. 14).

### **3. Doctoral Studies in Greece**

In this section, we will focus on the regulatory framework for doctoral studies in Greece. Three laws concerning doctoral studies were introduced in our country after 1999, the launch of the Bologna Process<sup>15</sup>. The first, Law 4009/2011, introduced three innovations regarding doctoral studies: a. the establishment of a School of Postgraduate Studies -this was also provided for in Law 1268/82 before Bologna; b. the reference to a doctoral program of studies incorporating the preparation of a doctoral thesis<sup>16</sup>, and c. co-supervision procedures. However, this legislative initiative was not implemented to the extent that universities reacted.

In 2017 and 2022, respectively, the next legislative initiatives concerning doctoral studies in the country were introduced. Meanwhile, the Hellenic Quality Assurance Authority noted in its 2015 and 2016 Reports<sup>17</sup> that most institutions were characterized by clarity and transparency regarding the criteria for admission of students to postgraduate and/or doctoral studies. Among the positive aspects of the strategy for doctoral programs of study, the Reports noted students' satisfaction with the quality of studies, research, and supervision. In addition, the development of inter-institutional cooperation for the preparation of doctoral theses and the participation of doctoral students in teaching and research projects were also positively evaluated. Finally, the

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<sup>15</sup> It is worth noting here that from one article in Law 4009/2011 (article 39) we have reached 8 articles in the last two laws regarding doctoral studies, which are complemented by the Regulations for Doctoral Studies at the university level and then at the Department level.

<sup>16</sup> In this regard, the Hellenic Quality Authority (HQA) in its 2009 Report argued that doctoral studies in Greece are not organized within a structured program (HQA, 2009). Later, in 2011, it reported that in many cases, doctoral theses were supervised with the aim to facilitate the professional development of faculty members (HQA, 2010).

<sup>17</sup> The information in these Reports is based on the compilation of the information provided by the Evaluation Reports. There, some Committees give information on doctoral studies. Most do not report on them. Therefore, National Authority Reports should be read carefully.

absorption of doctoral graduates into high-quality positions in academia and industry was identified as a positive factor.

On the other hand, the lack of a centralized structure or set of program regulations regarding, for example, access, and participation in training activities, courses, seminars, etc. was identified as one of the main weaknesses of the doctoral programs of study. The Reports also highlighted the large number of doctoral students per supervisor and the high ratio of doctoral students to teaching staff in some institutions. Similarly, the heavy workload of teaching staff was identified as a difficulty in developing a doctoral program of study. Finally, the Reports mentioned that insufficient funding for the maintenance of research laboratories and infrastructure was an additional barrier to the development of doctoral programs of study.

To conclude, the external evaluators have recommended the development of a better-organized system for the delivery of doctoral studies. To achieve this, they suggested formulating a coherent study framework with specific quality criteria and admission procedures, regulations, and a study guide. It was also recommended to develop common policies for the creation of programs based on courses, seminars, etc. These programs would provide academic support to doctoral students and contribute to networking and exchange of ideas between them and faculties both in Greece and abroad. Additionally, it was suggested to rationalize the number of doctoral students based on the criteria of available resources, excellence, and the needs of the Institution's research programs. Lastly, it was recommended to introduce a system for monitoring the studies of doctoral students (HQA<sup>18</sup>, 2016, 2017).

In this context, Law 4485/2017<sup>19</sup> refers to doctoral studies in Greece in eight articles (38-45). These articles are limited to the administrative processes for the selection, attendance, and evaluation of doctoral students. The provision for co-supervision and the introduction of a Regulation for Doctoral Studies (Article 45) on the part of the Departments regarding the organization and operation of the 3d cycle of studies (para. 2) were the only exceptions<sup>20</sup> (para. 2).

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<sup>18</sup> The Hellenic Quality Agency (HQA, ΑΔΙΠ in Greek) was replaced by Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE, ΕΘΑΑΕ in Greek) in 2020.

<sup>19</sup> However, without specific reference to the purpose.

<sup>20</sup> Indicatively, the Law 4485/2017, article 45, states the following: *By decision of the Assembly of the Department, the Regulations for Doctoral Studies of the Department are established, which are approved by the Senate, published in the Government Gazette, posted on the Department's website, and notified to the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs (paragraph 2).*



Under this regulatory framework, 1,923 new PhDs were awarded by Greek universities in 2022<sup>21</sup>, with the following characteristics according to National Documentation Center (EKT in Greek) (EKT, 2023):

- In terms of the number and profile of new doctorates, most doctorates were awarded at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki with 23,2% and 17,4% respectively. They were followed by the University of Patras (7,5%), the National Technical University of Athens (7,0%), the University of Ioannina (6,6%), the University of Thessaly (5,8%) and the Democritus University of Thrace (5,7%). The shares of the other universities that awarded doctorates in 2022 were below 5%. Most of the PhD graduates in 2022 were in the scientific fields of Medicine & Health Sciences (26,0%), Social Sciences (24,1%) and Natural Sciences<sup>22</sup> (22,0%). Regarding the gender distribution of new doctorates, new male doctorates slightly outnumbered female doctorates with 52,2% compared to 47,8%. Most new doctorates in 2022 belonged to the age groups 25-34 (39,4%) and 35-44 (36,6%). Most new doctorates were unmarried (55,8%) and had no children (58,6%).
- As regards the duration, most doctoral students completed their doctoral studies in four to six years: 16,0% in four years, 20,8% in five years and 16% in six years. A significant proportion took more than nine years to complete their studies (14,3%).
- Personal interest in doctoral research was the main reason (60,1%) for opting for doctoral studies, followed by the prospect of an academic career (21,1%) and access to better career opportunities (16,5%).
- Just over a third of new doctoral graduates in 2022 (34,5%) received funding (a scholarship or participation in a research project). For most new doctoral graduates (59,8%), paid employment, personal savings/financial support from family and self-employment were the main source of funding for doctoral studies<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> Year for which we have the most recent data available (EKT, 2023).

<sup>22</sup> A small percentage (10,2%) of the new PhD students developed a research collaboration with a company to serve the research objectives of their thesis. In these cases, the highest concentration of responses belonged to Engineering & Technology (EKT, 2023).

<sup>23</sup> Doctoral students in Natural Sciences, Engineering or Technology typically receive funding for their studies through grants or research projects related to their doctoral research. However, most employed students carry out their thesis in Social Sciences. Students who choose to self-fund their doctoral studies

- Concerning the professional activity and future goals of the new doctoral graduates, 82,3% of the new doctoral graduates were working during their doctoral studies. Most of them remained in the same job as before their doctorate (63,0%, in Medicine and Health Sciences). 14,9% were not working and were looking for a job (most of them in the natural sciences).
- In terms of their future goals, most (53,9%) intended to pursue a professional academic/research career - especially those whose thesis was in the social sciences. A significant proportion (19,0% - mainly from Social Sciences and Medicine & Health Sciences) did not intend to find a new job.

Based on the above, it seems that Greece in 2022 did not follow the European debate on doctoral studies. The qualitative data of the survey also showed a rather problematic situation, referring to a model from the past: the research produced is based more on personal preferences, while its association with innovation seems weak.

The most recent Law, Law 4957/2022, introduced several new provisions regarding doctoral studies. Firstly, Article 90, makes a clear reference to the purpose of doctoral studies. Secondly, the new law provides for the establishment of third-cycle programs including the doctoral thesis in a subject related to the scientific field covered by the Department and, an independent program of doctoral studies. Finally, an important development in this law is the provision for the introduction of industrial doctorates (Article 96). However, there are significant deviations from the European debate. There is no provision for the introduction of doctoral schools. The Greek legislator, aware of the opposition of the universities, suggests the creation of an internal Regulation for doctoral studies that will serve as a framework for their organization within each institution (Article 91). Moreover, the same law requires each Department (Article 79) to establish their own Regulations for doctoral studies based on the respective Institutional Regulation. The recent legislation has introduced a substantial number of bureaucratic processes that both institutions and departments must navigate, often with varying degrees of implementation.

Overall, the main provisions of the most recent law on doctoral studies in Greece are summarized in the Table 1 (see annex). We could note at this point the keywords “may”, “potentially” that on the one hand could promote institutions’ autonomy and, on

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are often found to be conducting a thesis in Medicine & Health Sciences. The majority of those who reported being employed carried out a thesis in Social Sciences (EKT, 2023).

the other could raise questions concerning the promotion of developments and possible changes taking place at European level. The range of provisions of Regulations for doctoral studies are described in Table 2 (see annex).

The two tables demonstrate that the law focuses on technical and procedural aspects away from the EUA suggestions. Instead, it seems to shift the responsibility for changes in doctoral studies to the universities but not in direct alignment with the European debate. Nevertheless, some provisions of the law move towards a more regulated framework in terms of the potential to introduce independent programs of study, developing partnerships within the university itself, between universities and based on international partnerships. On the other hand, industrial doctorates seek to link the research produced with industry but seem to exclude Humanities and Social Sciences<sup>24</sup>.

It is therefore of interest to examine the implementation of the law on the level of the institutions. In this effort, we will focus on the case of the University of Patras, which is a multidisciplinary HEI. At this point, it is useful to note that the Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE) will evaluate the third cycle of studies from 2023 to 2027. This process has not yet been initiated. Therefore, although we know that there will be a process, we do not yet have results. This perspective is important insofar as the Hellenic Authority's template will act as a pressure mechanism for the harmonization of doctoral studies in Greece.

#### **4. The case of the University of Patras**

The University of Patras offers 30 doctoral programs of study and has a total of 2,186 doctoral students enrolled in these programs. Of these, 6 are working on industrial doctorates<sup>25</sup>. Twenty-four students, from 2011 to date, have already completed or are working on their PhDs with co-supervision<sup>26</sup>. Finally, in eight Departments out of 30, the process of submitting the revised Regulation of Doctoral Studies based on the provisions

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<sup>24</sup> As stated in article 96 (Law 4957/2022), candidates who meet the requirements for enrolment in doctoral programs according to article 92 may apply for a doctorate in collaboration with a company or industry, based or having a branch in Greece, which *concerns the conduct of industrial or applied research in order to extract research results for the production of innovative products or services*. An industrial doctorate under this Article may be financed from the resources of the Recovery and Resilience Fund and enterprises or industries established or operating a branch in the country.

<sup>25</sup> The numbers refer to 2021: 4 proposals were funded for the Faculty of Engineering, 1 proposal for the Faculty of Science and 1 proposal for the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration (see also <https://uphd.upatras.gr/>, accessed 09.03.2024).

<sup>26</sup> PhDs with co-supervision are exclusively concerned with collaborations with foreign countries: Armenia, Canada, Malta, Malta, Slovakia, Germany (1), Belgium (3), France (14), and Italy (2), (cf. and <https://www.upatras.gr/education/phd-studies/collaborative-phd-programs/>, accessed on 09.03.2024).

of Law 4957/2022 has been completed: Fisheries & Aquaculture, Biology, Agriculture, Food Science and Technology, Mechanical and Aeronautical Engineering, Physics, Chemistry and the Department of Educational Studies and Social Work.

We will focus on the provisions made in these Regulations, as well as in one of the University of Patras, by referring to issues related to the scope and purpose of the thesis and the establishment of the doctoral programs of study in the Departments, the organization, the structure, and the content of the doctoral studies.

It is important to note that only the Departments of Agriculture and Educational Sciences & Social Work allow for doctoral programs that cover multiple scientific disciplines. The other doctoral programs of study focus on the scientific discipline covered by the respective Department (Table 3, see annex).

The purpose of the doctoral programs of study at the University of Patras is the following: PhD studies aim at the creation of high-quality and modern scientific research, as well as the training of scientists capable of contributing to the progress and development of science and basic research. Graduates of doctoral programs are intended to contribute to the research, business, and educational potential of the country and abroad. At the same time, the doctoral program of study is a source of academic prestige and international academic distinction for the Department, as well as for the University in general, and contributes to the qualitative and quantitative upgrading of research output. In relation to the purpose set by the legislation (Article 90) - the promotion of original scientific research and the substantial contribution to the development of knowledge in at least one (1) scientific discipline - the University and the Departments seem to be more specific. One aspect highlights the production of cutting-edge scientific research, while another emphasizes the programs' goal of equipping graduates to contribute to the research, business, and educational sectors of their country. Additionally, the Departments view doctoral programs of study as a tool for enhancing their international reputation and improving the quantity and quality of their research.

The University of Patras Regulations for Doctoral Studies reflect a variety of issues, technical and procedural, concerning the organization of doctoral studies (Table 4, see annex).

The examination of the Regulations for doctoral studies of the Departments of the University of Patras on the issue of the structure of doctoral studies revealed differences within the institution.

Regulations of most of the Departments in the University of Patras provide for the potential inclusion of a cycle of courses or other educational or research activities, corresponding at least to thirty (30) ECTS in addition to the preparation of a thesis. However, The Department of Chemistry does not adopt this provision. They argue that doctoral students are Master's degree graduates. They also allow, under certain conditions, the Tripartite Advisory Committee to select a maximum of three (3) courses from the undergraduate curriculum or postgraduate programs organized by the Department of Chemistry that doctoral students must attend.

On the other hand, the Department of Mechanical & Aeronautical Engineering formulates a doctoral program of study that includes a combination of several doctoral-level courses with educational and research activities, corresponding to a minimum of thirty (30) ECTS<sup>27</sup>.

The Department of Education Sciences & Social Work offers a unique doctoral program consisting of three parallel cycles of activities, awarding 60 ECTS. Additionally, doctoral students are required to prepare and write a thesis, earning 120 ECTS, resulting in a total of 180 ECTS for the three-year program. In the "Education" cycle, a 4 ECTS methodology course/seminar is mandatory, and students will also need to be involved in teaching assignments, attend seminars or courses, or participate in organizing Department seminars and events (16 ECTS). In the "Research" cycle, students will be required to participate in the work of the integrated laboratory and research/research groups (20 ECTS). Finally, in the "Writing and publications" cycle, students must publish their research work as part of their studies (20 ECTS)<sup>28</sup>.

In conclusion, and with regard specifically to the content of the doctoral programs of study, we would like to highlight the fact that Regulations for doctoral studies across all Departments of the University of Patras (adapted to new law) make reference to the potential introduction of co-supervised doctoral theses as well as the preparation of industrial doctoral theses in accordance with the provisions of Law 4957/2022 (see also Table 1).

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<sup>27</sup> With the agreement of the supervisor of doctoral students are required to successfully complete a minimum of four (4) courses from the Department's doctoral study program or from another Postgraduate Study Program, which, in combination with the rest of their scientific and research work, may add up to a minimum of thirty (30) ECTS. The courses offered at doctoral level are considered to lay the foundations for theoretical and applied research of high quality, which may result in publications in international scientific journals.

<sup>28</sup> In peer review journals.

Overall, an indicative profile of doctoral studies at the University of Patras based on the revised Regulations is shown in the following table (Table 5).

**Table 1:** *Indicative profile of the Doctoral Programs of Study at the University of Patras*

Department	Scientific Discipline	Purpose	Organisation of Studies	Structure of Studies	Content
Fisheries & Aquaculture	Earth Sciences	- High quality and modern scientific research  - Training scientists capable of contributing to the progress and development of science and basic research	See table 4	See table 4	Thesis within the scientific discipline of the Department
Biology	Biological Sciences				
Agriculture	Disciplines of the Department as well as related fields				
Food Science & Technology	Food Science & Technology				
Educational Sciences & Social Work	Areas that fall within the research interests and/or the scientific subject areas that the Department treats	- Enhancing the country's research, business, and education potential	See table 4, but maximum number of supervisions of doctoral students per faculty member: (10)	Three cycles of activities and a thesis	
Mechanical & Aeronautical Engineering	Sciences of Engineering	- Academic prestige for the University nationally and internationally	See table 4	Courses attendance and a thesis	- Thesis within the scientific field of the Department. - Two (2) industrial PhDs
Physics	Natural Sciences			See table 4	Thesis within the scientific discipline of the Department
Chemistry	Chemistry			The provision for the program is not adopted	- Thesis within the scientific discipline of the Department - One (1) industrial PhD

Table 6 presents a comparative analysis of the ten points summarizing the current debate on doctoral studies at the European level (EUA-CDE, 2022) and within Greece, considering the newly enacted Law 4957/2022 of the Greek state and the regulations for doctoral studies adopted by the University of Patras.

**Table 2:** *Doctoral studies in Greece in the European context*

	EUA - ways forward	Doctoral studies in Greece: the case of the University of Patras
1	Doctoral schools serve as a place where the opportunities and challenges of new digital technologies are embraced in the pursuit of research goals and in their own enabling frameworks	The content of the research in the context of a thesis may address these issues.
2	Universities should embrace Sustainable Development Goals as a holistic framework providing a context for and supporting the delivery of doctoral education	There is no clear reference in the legislation. Compliance with the Sustainable Development Goals

		is a systemic issue that is part of the overall strategic planning of each university <sup>29</sup>
3	Research and education should contribute to the resolution of the environmental, demographic, socio-economic, and political challenges that Europe and the world are facing	The content of the research in the context of a thesis may address these issues
4	Diverse doctoral education must be sensitive to the backgrounds of doctoral candidates -social, economic, cultural barriers must be overcome	- Doctoral studies are offered free of charge - Doctoral students may participate in research projects/programs of the HEI and receive grants in the framework of co-funded, self-funded or other projects/programs for the financial support of their doctoral research.
5	Doctoral education should promote a dialogue about the different dimensions of academic freedoms -open space for critical debate and the exchange of opposite views	The content of the research in the context of a thesis may address these issues
6	Doctoral education needs to embrace the variety of formats which have emerged but at the same time to ensure that the core principles, including the importance of conducting original research, remain integral to all of these	In Greece, the following formats of doctoral studies may exist: a. apprenticeship model, b. attendance of courses and a thesis, c. co-supervision, d. joint degrees in the framework of European programs and e. industrial doctorates
7	A fit for purpose quality assurance system is essential but the overarching goal is the quality of research, not the use of a particular tool	The completion of the process of establishing study programs and the start of their operation requires their prior accreditation by the National Authority for Higher Education (HAHE). Their continued operation requires their periodic accreditation every five (5) years as part of the evaluation of the academic unit to which they belong.
8	Doctoral candidates must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to meet with the modern demands of research and pursue their chosen career paths -develop tacit, explicit, and transversal skills	The development of doctoral student's skills may be done in the context of all possible formats of doctoral studies in Greece
9	Supervision is crucial training of supervisors to embrace their roles	There is no clear reference in the legislation. However, the issues of university pedagogy and the overall support of students in the context of the Greek university are raised in the context of a newly established institution: Teaching and Learning Support Centers (KEDIMA in Greek)
10	Doctoral candidates work should be appropriately rewarded -not at the expense of the availability of doctoral positions	- The minimum and maximum number of enrolment of PhDs is set by the Department Assembly based on the number of faculty members, the maximum number of PhDs that can be supervised by the same faculty member, the infrastructure, the classrooms, the labor market needs, etc. - Doctoral students may participate in research projects/programs of the HEI and receive grants in the framework of co-funded, self-funded or other projects/programs for the financial support of their doctoral research <sup>30</sup> .

## 5. Discussion - Conclusions

In the previous analysis, we have discussed the recent changes in doctoral studies across Europe and Greece. We have focused on the organization, structure, and content of doctoral studies. We have also discussed the current importance of doctoral studies in

<sup>29</sup> Indicatively, at the University of Patras, sustainability and "Green" operations are developed as part of the strategic planning of the University of Patras. For further information see: <https://green.upatras.gr/services/electrical/>, accessed on 21.03.2024.

<sup>30</sup> See also footnote 19.

Europe and the recent legislative framework in Greece at national and sub-national levels (the University). Our analysis has specifically covered the implementation of national legislative framework at the sub-national level, particularly at the University of Patras - we have summarized our findings in Table 6.

To address our initial inquiry on the coordination of recent developments in doctoral studies at both national (Greece) and sub-national (University of Patras) levels with those at the European level, we have arrived at the following conclusions:

- It appears that the legislative framework in our country is not fully up to date with the developments in European universities regarding doctoral studies. However, some provisions have been made for establishing independent programs of doctoral studies, industrial doctorates, and co-supervision of doctoral thesis, which indicate a willingness to adapt to new conditions in terms of study structure and content, including national needs. Additionally, some of the proposals in the HQA/HAHE Reports over the years have been echoed in the provisions for the formulation of Regulations for Doctoral Studies,
- In Greece, the traditional method of delivering doctoral studies involves support to the doctoral candidate with guidance from a Tripartite Advisory Committee and specifically, a supervisor (apprenticeship model). Therefore, the relationship between the doctoral candidate and the supervisor<sup>31</sup> remains crucial and fundamental,
- In our country, there are characteristics that define why people pursue PhDs and what their future goals are in terms of academic careers. These unique features are largely influenced by the distorted structure of Greece's labor market and economy. However, the current needs of doctoral students in Greece do not align with the professional prospects and development of horizontal skills -emphasized at the relevant European debate. This issue carries significant implications and should be thoroughly discussed and reflected upon by policymakers,
- The legislative framework in Greece aims to establish a structure that prevents a direct conflict with the university's established traditions. However, this framework leads to a large bureaucratic system in technical and procedural matters, while overlooking crucial aspects such as the research objective and the

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<sup>31</sup> See footnote 32 regarding the issue of the thesis copyright.



candidate-supervisor relationship. Additionally, the proposed organizational structure allows for significant variability between and within institutions.

Recent developments in doctoral studies, particularly at the European level, have raised concerns about the balance between teaching and research, as well as between applied and basic research. These concerns have short-term implications for doctoral studies. One issue is the increasing diversity in the structure and content of doctorates at the European level, which may lead to a lack of common understanding of the purpose and value of doctoral studies overall. A second issue is the limited provision for industrial doctorates in the Humanities and Social Sciences, which could potentially shift the focus of doctoral studies away from these fields. Finally, there is a growing number of bureaucratic and training obligations for teaching and research staff, which can create additional challenges for those involved in doctoral studies.

In summary, the ongoing European discussion regarding changes to doctoral studies has had an impact on Greece, but the country has responded by adapting these developments to its own national context. While the Greek legislation is actively pushing for changes in doctoral studies, individual institutions are given the freedom to adapt the framework to their own needs, resulting in varying speeds of change. Departments also play a role in this process by creating their own regulations, further contributing to the differentiation in the speed of adaptation. Looking ahead, the Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE) will likely play a crucial role in guiding this process. However, despite these changes, the fundamental supervisor-candidate relationship remains strong and even emphasized. Additionally, the co-ownership of research results between the supervisor and doctoral candidate has been institutionalized, likely due to the potential for profitable outcomes in the labor market.

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## Annex

**Table 3:** *The main provisions of Law 4957/2022 on doctoral studies in Greece (Articles 90-97)*

<b>Purpose</b>	Higher Educational Institutions may organize 3d cycle programs of study, which aim to promote original scientific research and make a substantial contribution to the development of knowledge in at least one (1) scientific discipline, which lead to the award of a doctoral degree after the successful completion of a doctoral thesis (Article 90).
<b>Content - Structure</b>	3d cycle programs of study include the preparation of a doctoral thesis in a subject related to a scientific discipline related to the Department and may, potentially, incorporate a program of doctoral study, corresponding to educational and research activities of at least thirty (30) ECTS credits, (Article 90).
<b>Thesis co-supervision</b>	Co-supervised 3d cycle study programs are organized by a HEI Department in cooperation with another or more Departments of the same or another HEI in Greece, a Higher Military Educational Institutions, Higher Ecclesiastical Academies, research and technological institutions of article 13A of Law No. 4310/2014 (A' 258), Research University Institutes, the Academy of Athens, the Institute of Medical and Biological Research of the Academy of Athens, as well as with foreign institutions. The partnership with educational institutions of non-formal post-secondary education of the Law of the Republic of Cyprus is not allowed 3696/2008 (A' 177), (Article 90).
<b>Thesis supervision</b>	By decision of the Assembly of the Department, a Tripartite Advisory Committee is appointed, including the supervisor. The advisory committee may include as members: a) Members of the Teaching and Research Staff of each level of the Department of the HEI, b) Members of the faculty of other Departments of the same or another HEI, c) Emeritus Professors and retired faculty members, d) Members of the teaching and research staff of Higher Military Educational Institutions and Higher Ecclesiastical Academies, e) Researchers of any level serving in research and technological institutions of article 13A of Law No. 4310/2014 (A' 258), including the Academy of Athens and the Institute of Medical and Biological Research of the Academy of Athens, as well as the scientific staff of the Hellenic Geological and Mineral Research Authority (IGME in Greek) of article 25 of Law No. 4602/2019 (A' 45), if he/she has a doctoral degree and research activity related to the subject of the doctoral thesis, f) professors of foreign institutions and researchers of foreign research organizations. The members of the Tripartite Advisory Committee have scientific work relevant to the doctoral thesis (Article 94).
<b>Duration</b>	The period for the award of a doctoral degree may not be less than three (3) full calendar years from the date of the appointment of the Tripartite Advisory Committee. The maximum duration for the completion of the doctoral thesis shall be six (6) calendar years. The maximum duration of the doctoral thesis may be extended by decision of the Assembly of the Department, at the request of the doctoral candidate and with the consent of the Tripartite Advisory Committee for good cause. The maximum duration of the extension and the specific issues concerning the right to extend the duration of the doctoral thesis are defined in the Regulations for Doctoral Studies of the Department.
<b>Industrial PhDs</b>	Candidates who meet the requirements for enrolment in doctoral programs may apply for doctoral studies in collaboration with a company or industry with its registered office or a branch operating in Greece, for the purpose of carrying out industrial or applied research aimed at obtaining research results for the production of innovative products or services, with the possibility of partial or total financing either by the company or by the Recovery and Resilience Fund. A representative of the company or industry with experience and knowledge relevant to the subject of the doctoral thesis will be involved in the

	supervision of the industrial doctoral thesis and may participate, without the right to vote, in the meetings of the Tripartite Advisory Committee and the seven-member Examination Committee, expressing his/her views <sup>32</sup> (Article 96).
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**Table 4:** Range of provisions of Regulations for Doctoral Studies - the University & Department (Law 4957/2022)

	<b>Regulation of Postgraduate and Doctoral Programmes (University)</b>	<b>Regulation of Doctoral Studies (Departments)</b>
1	Criteria for the determination of the minimum and maximum number of students admitted to each doctoral program of studies	Application Requirements
2	Criteria for admission and selection of students	Necessary enrollment certificates
3	Rights and obligations of doctoral students	Thesis Language
4	- Procedure for the awarding of scholarships, to doctoral students, - Maximum number of scholarships awarded, - Scholarship eligibility criteria	Registration process
5	Suspension and resumption of studies	- Supervision - Maximum number of doctoral students allowed to be supervised by the same faculty member
6	- Teaching assignments to doctoral students, - Maximum hourly rate for doctoral students	Specific reasons and conditions for replacing a supervisor or another member of the Tripartite Advisory Committee
7	Procedure for awarding doctorates	Obligations and rights of doctoral students
8	Any other matter related to the organization and operation of doctoral programs of studies of the HEIs	- Monitoring and completion of the thesis, - Additional requirements for the award of a doctoral degree
9		- Course attendance, workshops or seminars related to the preparation of the thesis, - Additional obligations of the doctoral students, such as interim deliverables, and their supervisors, such as periodic progress reports
10		-Involvement of doctoral student in the educational process - Teaching assignments to doctoral students
11		Maximum duration of thesis
12		Suspension and resumption of studies
13		- Issues related to the completion of the thesis, - Award of the doctoral degree, - Format and content of the doctoral degree,
14		Process of public defense online
15		- Terms and conditions for industrial doctoral studies, - Collaboration with private institutions for the preparation of doctoral research in industrial doctorates,

<sup>32</sup> This provision rather corrects the provisions of article 126 of Law 4926/2022 which stated that: "the collaborating enterprise or industry shall appoint one (1) representative with experience and knowledge relevant to the subject of the doctoral thesis, who shall have the task of guiding the doctoral candidate. The representative of the enterprise or industry may participate as a member of the three-member advisory committee, provided that he/she holds a doctoral degree, with the consent of the Assembly of the Department, notwithstanding articles 38 and 41 of Law No. 4485/2017" (par.2).

		- Terms and conditions and possibility for the organization to be represented in the Scientific Committee of three and/or seven members
16		Any other matter related to the organization and operation of the third cycle of studies of a department.

**Table 5:** *Doctoral program disciplines*

Department	Scientific Discipline
Fisheries & Aquaculture	Earth Sciences
Biology	Biological Sciences
Agriculture	Disciplines of the Department as well as related fields
Food Science & Technology	Food Science & Technology
Educational Sciences and Social Work	Areas that fall within the research interests and/or the scientific disciplines of the Department
Mechanical & Aeronautical Engineering	Sciences of the Engineer
Physics	Natural Sciences
Chemistry	Chemistry

**Table 6:** *The organization of doctoral studies at the University of Patras*

Topics	Provisions of the Regulations on the organization of studies
<b>Quality Assurance, Accreditation</b>	The completion of the process of establishing study programs and the start of their operation requires their prior accreditation by the National Authority for Higher Education (HAHE). For their continued operation, their periodic accreditation is required every five (5) years as part of the evaluation of the academic unit to which they belong <sup>33</sup> .
<b>Number of Doctoral Students</b>	The minimum and maximum number of enrolments of the PhD students is set by the Department Assembly based on the number of faculty members, the maximum number of PhD students that can be supervised by the same faculty member, infrastructure, the classrooms, the needs of the labour market, etc.
<b>Eligibility</b>	- Master's degree graduates, - Other conditions set out in detail
<b>Application, Evaluation of proposals</b>	The necessary documents and the procedure for the evaluation of the proposal for a thesis are described
<b>Supervision</b>	The Department's Assembly, if it considers that the candidate fulfils the requirements for the preparation of a dissertation, appoints a Tripartite Advisory Committee, which consists of the Supervisor and two other members (on the recommendation of the Supervisor), with the responsibility of supporting the candidate during the process of preparing and writing the dissertation and monitoring its progress, as well as the language of writing the dissertation. The maximum number of theses per faculty member –as main supervisor- is five (5) <sup>34</sup> .
<b>Obligations the Doctoral student</b>	Doctoral studies are offered free of charge. The obligations of the doctoral students include, among others: - the submission of a detailed annual progress report - the cooperation with the Supervisor and the members of the Advisory Committee, - teaching assignments by decision of the Assembly of the Department,

<sup>33</sup> We must note at this point that the National Authority for Higher Education (HAHE) will evaluate the third cycle of studies from 2023 to 2027. As of today, the process has not been initiated.

<sup>34</sup> The Regulations for Doctoral Studies of the Department of Education & Social Work provides for a maximum of 10 theses per faculty member as a maximum limit for supervision of doctoral dissertations.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the pursuit of an active academic presence in the international academic system,</li> <li>- the main scientific occupation of HRDs should be their doctoral studies, and</li> <li>- Doctoral students may participate in research projects/programs of the HEI and receive grants in the framework of co-funded, self-funded or other projects/programs for the financial support of their doctoral research.</li> </ul>
<b>Duration</b>	<p>The duration of the doctoral degree may not be less than three (3) full calendar years from the date of the appointment of the advisory committee. The maximum duration of the doctoral degree is six (6) calendar years.</p> <p>Common conditions for extending studies are provided for.</p>
<b>Language</b>	<p>In case the thesis is written in English, the doctoral candidate is obliged to include in the final text of the thesis an extensive abstract in Greek.</p>
<b>Copyright, Plagiarism, Suspension of studies</b>	<p>References are made to the procedures and conditions for suspending a doctoral student<sup>35</sup>.</p> <p>Issues of copyright<sup>36</sup>, ethics and plagiarism are discussed.</p> <p>It presents the process of awarding a PhD.</p>
<b>Scholarships</b>	<p>The University of Patras may provide scholarships to doctoral students based on criteria of excellence and with the aim of rewarding them, as well as scholarships for the provision of work or for participation in research and development projects under specific conditions.</p>

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<sup>35</sup> A doctoral candidate may be removed from the programme by a decision of the Departmental Assembly following a reasoned recommendation of the three-member advisory committee (Regulation of Postgraduate and Doctoral Studies Programmes of the University of Patras, article 10).

<sup>36</sup> The copyright of the thesis belongs to those who contributed to its preparation. All the material produced in the framework of the thesis cannot be used (in whole or in part) without the written permission of the author and the Supervisor (Regulation of Postgraduate and Doctoral Study Programs of the University of Patras, article 14). In the special case of industrial doctoral theses, it is provided that the determination of intellectual property rights on the work carried out during the course of the doctoral thesis is regulated by a protocol of cooperation between the Higher Educational Institution (HEI), the cooperating company or industry and the doctoral candidate, which is approved by the Senate of the HEI, on the recommendation of the Department (Article 17).