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# Study on the organisation of doctoral programmes in EU neighbouring countries

**The Russian Federation**



Education and Culture DG

# General information on the study

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Project Director: Isabelle Collins

Project Manager: Elisabeth Zaparucha/ Philippe Larrue

Tel. Number: +33 1 49 49 09 25

Fax Number: +33 1 49 49 09 29

E-Mail: [elisabeth.zaparucha@technopolis-group.com](mailto:elisabeth.zaparucha@technopolis-group.com)

The study was produced by a team of consultants within Technopolis Group (Lars Geschwind, Flora Giarracca, Jakob Hellman, Carlos Hinojosa, Pauline Mattsson) and GHK (Anca Dumitrescu).

Valuable comments were received during the Steering Committees from: Claire Morel, Philippe Ruffio, Dimitris Kokkalis, Helene Skikos, Florent Bernard, Vanessa Debiais-Sainton, Marta Touykova, David Crosier.

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## 1. Doctoral programmes data

In 2006, there were 548 institutions in Russia training doctoral candidates of which 178 Research Institutes (RI) and 370 HEI.

In October 2009<sup>1</sup> was declared a decade of reform for the Russian higher education. The objective is to improve Russian *Vyschee Utchebnoe Zavedenie* (VUZ) or Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) competitiveness and legibility at the international level. Three groups of HEI have been set up:

- The two State university of Moscow a and Saint Petersburg have a specific status and are directly under the President of the Russian Federation that name rectors and allocate a budget
- Seven federal universities are focused on a training of excellence
- 29 national research universities whose objective is to bridge scientific research, training and innovation

Moscow State University is regarded as the most important university and holds, as well as Saint Petersburg State University, a more autonomous position compared to the other HEI in the Russian Federation. The training of doctoral candidates is concentrated in the Central, North-West, South, the Volga region, Urals, Siberian and Far-Eastern Federal Districts.

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- Population: 141.9m  
 - GDP per capita: €8.090  
 - % of GDP spent on education: 3.9% (2006)  
 - % of GDP spent on research: 1.12% (2007)  
 - Doctoral candidates enrolled: 151,828

2008 UNESCO IUS data

Figure 1 Data on the number of doctoral candidates

Category	Number (date)
Total number of doctoral candidates (Candidate of Science)	88 412 (2008)
Total number of completed Candidate of Sciences	19 046 (2008)
Total number of doctoral candidates (Doctor of Science)	3 258 (2008)
Total number of doctoral candidates in HEI (Doctor of Science)	3 763 (2006)
Total number of doctoral candidates at RI (Doctor of Science)	426 (2006)

In 2006, 450 candidates completed a Candidate of Sciences and defended a thesis; out of these, 35 were in RI and 415 candidates in HEI<sup>2</sup>.

In general, the number of students has increased dramatically during the last years, but still there are not enough candidates in many universities. According to one of our interviewees one possible explanation is the current level of salaries for researchers, which makes it a rather unattractive career choice. Many young people who are eligible for doctoral programmes are not dedicated enough to accept these terms and conditions. There also seems to be barriers, for example, the lack of entrepreneurial skills, hindering seeking of international grants in order to supplement meagre scholarships and salaries.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/5793>

<sup>2</sup> Russian State Committee for Statistics of the Russian Federation, 2007

## 2. Doctoral programmes

### 2.1 Doctoral programmes overall organisation

The Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation – **MES** as well as the Federal Inspection Agency for Education and Science are the main bodies responsible for doctoral programmes in Russia. In addition, there are ministries, such as Healthcare, Agriculture, Internal Affairs, Culture, Transportation etc, which are responsible for doctoral programmes within HEI falling into their respective field. The Higher Attestation Commission of the MES of Russia, known as **VAK**, is responsible for the confirmation of the two existing doctoral degrees (both levels). The Federal Inspection Agency for Education and Science is responsible for controlling and monitoring as well as licensing and accrediting of HEI and RI. The same agency is also the formal employer of HEI, although it is about to transfer this function to the MES of Russia.

Doctoral programmes can be organised and set up by HEIs or by RIs. The institutions have the right to recruit doctoral candidates. However, both HEIs and RIs must be accredited and they need a license granting them the right to carry out educational activities. Accredited HEIs have the possibility to apply to VAK to obtain the right to provide advanced studies (Aspirantura and Doktorantura) and train researchers. When VAK requirements are met, this right is granted. The current VAK requirements were adopted in 2007 in the Regulation on Councils for Defense of Candidate and Doctoral dissertations. The main articles include:

- Article 2.1 stipulates that dissertation councils are established in the order approved by the Federal Supervision Agency at HEIs widely known for their achievements in a certain area of knowledge that have state accreditation and at RIs, based on the decision of the VAK following appropriate application submitted by the RIs.
- Article 2.2 stipulates that the application for establishment of the dissertation council must contain justification of its establishment, guarantees that all necessary conditions for its functioning will be observed, and that necessary funding will be provided to support reviewing and approval of dissertations. The application must also include a copy of the license granting the right to implement curricula of postgraduate professional education; a copy of certificate of state accreditation (for HEIs) and information about proposed members of the dissertation council.
- Article 2.6 stipulates that a dissertation council must meet the following requirements: the doctoral council must have no less than seven doctors of science for each branch of science and specialty, of which 5 must work in the RI or HEI on a full time basis; the candidates' council must have no less than five doctors of science for each branch of science represented at the council, 3 of which must be fulltime employees of the organisation at which the dissertation council is established. Each member of the dissertation council must represent only one specialty within a certain branch of science. A doctor or a candidate of science can be a member of no more than two dissertation councils.
- Article 2.8 Changes in the membership of the dissertation council are introduced by the Federal Supervision Agency on the basis of the decision of VAK, following a request from the organisation where the dissertation council is established.
- Article 2.11 The Federal Supervision Agency suspends or stops activities of dissertation councils following the decision of the VAK, as well as when the approved procedures for submission and defence of dissertations have been violated.

The detailed organisation of education (enrolment, approval of individual plans and thesis titles, appointment of research supervisors, etc.) is within the remit of the institutions providing doctoral programmes.

The legal regulation of doctoral programmes is the purview of Federal laws, decrees of the Russian Government, orders by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science and Technology. The Law of the Russian Federation on higher and post-university professional education outlines the basic principles but most parts are regulated in the Russian Ministry of Education's **Order No. 814 of 27 March 1988 "On adopting provisions for training academic, teaching and research staff through the system of doctoral professional education in the Russian Federation"**. This order includes mastering the content and terms of programmes, selection criteria and procedures, and requirements for the attestation of *soiskateli* (candidate carrying out research independently without attending classes and lectures), etc.

Compared to the situation in most European countries, the organisation of doctoral programmes in the Russian Federation is **centralised** with a **low level of autonomy for the HEIs and RIs** (the latter to a slightly lesser extent). The Russian Federation is such a huge country that there is no possibility to cover all different kinds of programmes within the scope of this report. Therefore the main focus in the report will be on the regulations relative to the Order No. 814. but within more "subjective" themes such as policy and challenges. Examples from the experience of the different interviewees illustrate the report.

## Policy

The existing system of doctoral degrees owns its heritage from the Soviet system, which in turn was directly influenced by the German educational system. At the moment, the Russian system of education is undergoing **major reforms**. The main driver behind the changes is the **internationalisation** in terms of the growing need to **mutually recognise qualifications** including those at the doctoral level, the relevance of which is growing in the globalised world. Suggestions regarding reform changes in the system of attestation of highly qualified researchers are about to be made, but it is far from certain when they will be implemented. Another aspect is the doctoral curricula, where Russia differs from other countries with its more loose structure. The Ministry has stressed the importance of looking at best practice in the USA, Japan and European countries. There is a **strong opposition to make thorough changes in the system** of the two levels of advanced degrees from people who are holding the Doctor of Sciences (Doktor Nauk), worried of losing their status. The HEIs must implement at the latest in September 2011 the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation of standards which are designed in compliance with Bologna principles.

## 2.2 Doctoral programmes structure

### 2.2.1 Definition of doctoral programmes

There are two hierarchical levels of degrees; the **Aspirantura** (doctoral programmes that lead to the degree of Kandidat Nauk or The Candidate of Sciences, the first level, would be equivalent to PhD) and the **Doktorantura** (post-doctoral programmes leading to the degree of Doktor Nauk or the Doctor of Sciences, the second level, a higher qualification compared to PhD as against the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)<sup>3</sup> or Dublin Descriptors<sup>4</sup>. It corresponds to Habilitation in Germany and Poland).

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<sup>3</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc44\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc44_en.htm)

### 2.2.2 Duration

The Aspirantura (Kandidat Nauk or The Candidate of Sciences) programme lasts **officially no longer than three years**, but evidence tells us that in reality it usually lasts longer. There are both full time and part time Aspirantura studies. The part time studies may not exceed four years.

The Doktorantura (Doktor Nauk or the post-doctoral programmes) programme lasts officially three years. But it is also possible to write a dissertation independently without a fixed programme. This independent post-doctoral research **may last from five to 15 years**. According to data (VAK), a newly awarded Candidate of Science will on average need 16 additional years to obtain the Doctor of Sciences.

There is an annual evaluation of the doctoral candidates (by the attestation committees appointed by the department and research units), who must present a progress report. Post-docs who follow the three years fixed Doktorantura programme must also present an annual report on the results of the work accomplished, as measured against their individual programmes, to the Academic Council which is responsible for monitoring their progress and for reaching decisions as to their continuation in Doktorantura.

### 2.2.3 Funding

Each public HEI or RI entitled to run doctoral programmes receives funding from the **public budget** (state or municipal depending on its ownership) which funds a **limited number** of doctoral candidates and post-doctoral students. Each RI and HEI has a quota for the so-called **budget candidates**. The respective ministries and agencies distribute the quotas for post-docs training, within budget funds. For those who fail to be admitted within this quota there is a possibility to get training on a fee paying basis. The payment can be provided by individuals or by legal entities (such as companies, firms, institutions) that are interested in hiring the doctoral candidate and post-docs on completion of their dissertations.

**Full time doctoral candidates** with state funding are granted a **scholarship** of a certain amount; candidates from other cities are provided with accommodation on the campus. Rectors of HEI and Heads of RI may raise the scholarships of the candidates without any restrictions. Doctoral candidates may also be rewarded national scholarships in memory of prominent scholars while special scholarships at the HEIs or RIs may be granted by the decision of the Scientific Council of the HEI or RI, and are financed by off-budget funds. According to one of our interviewees, the country's leading industrialists are known to establish scholarships for candidates, often at universities from which they have graduated.

**Part-time doctoral candidates** are entitled to an annual leave for 30 days provided by the employer with their average salary retained. This annual extra leave is supplemented by the time spent on the journey from the place of work to the location of the postgraduate department and back with the average pay retained. Part-time doctoral candidates are entitled to one day off a week with a 50 percent pay of the wages retained but not less than the federal statutory minimal wage.

Each doctoral candidate funded by the state budget is provided with an annual benefit of two monthly scholarships to purchase research literature.

According to our interviewees, the stipends paid by the state are considered as relatively low (about 50 dollar/month). Therefore most candidates must both carry out teaching and additional research and function as research fellows and teaching

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.jointquality.org/>



assistants. Around 15-20 percent of all doctoral candidates are self-financing candidates and the rest receive stipends.

Additional funding can also be available via research project funding, which considerably exceeds the size of the State scholarship. Funding of such projects is almost exclusively public. The private sector has not been a major player so far. The federal target programme "Research and education personnel for the innovative Russia for 2009-2013" makes provisions for supporting doctoral candidates. Most of the sections of this programme contain an additional requirement for obligatory involvement of doctoral candidates.

Supervisors receive small payment for supervising. The dissertation council is financed from the University budget.

#### *2.2.4 Doctoral candidate status*

Doctoral candidates in Russia are considered as **a combination of students and research workers**. They have the rights of students but usually work as a research assistant.

There is a current debate on the Aspirantura, if it should have a more structured curriculum as a study programme or as the first part of a research career.

#### *2.2.5 Doctoral candidates rights*

The period as doctoral candidate could be prolonged for maternity leave as well as for illness lasting over a month (upon presentation of the relevant medical opinion and within the limits of the scholarship fund).

Candidates who have completed a course and have fully complied with all requirements stipulated in the regulation are provided with a monthly leave.

Doctoral candidates have free access to equipment, laboratories, educational methodological centres and libraries; they also enjoy the rights to make trips to HEI and Research centres in foreign states, take part in expeditions to do relevant research along with researchers from HEI or RI.

Organisation of doctoral programmes in Russia includes individual study (soiskatel'stvo) and the two structured doctoral programmes, the Aspirantura programme and the Doktorantura. The soiskatel'stvo is rather popular in Russia and old statistics from 2001 (MES of Russia) showed that 54,5 % of all doctoral theses and 38,9 % of all candidate theses were defended through independent study. Each soiskatel is assigned to a supervisor who helps him/her to determine the plan for preparing the dissertation, provides consultations, reviews the prepared articles, research, chapters of the dissertation. The soiskatel annually reports on the progress of his work.

During the doctoral study a candidate is expected to:

- Complete his/her individual plan;
- Pass qualifying exams for the Candidate degree in Philosophy, Foreign Language and special discipline.
- Prepare publications in research journals.
- Write a thesis, present it to the department (scientific council, section, laboratory, and sector) and get an appropriate opinion.

Doctoral candidates' individual plans and themes of dissertations are provided by Rectors /scientific councils/ of HEI or Heads /scientific and technical councils/ of RI, at the presentation of departments /sections, sectors, laboratories/ within the dates set by higher educational establishments and scientific institutions, organisations. A

scientific advisor (supervisor) monitors the implementation by the doctoral candidate of his/her individual plan.

In the case of change in circumstances, for example if a doctoral candidate works parallel to preparing its dissertation, it is possible to also change working conditions. Based on their application, doctoral candidates may be transferred from one HEI or RI to another as well as from a full-time course to a part-time and vice versa by the Rector or HEI or Head of RI provided there are sufficient funds.

## 2.3 Doctoral programmes content

### 2.3.1 Research

Doctoral candidates have an 80/20 relation between research and courses. Research is usually concentrated to the second and third year. The Doktorantura consists only of research.

One interviewee shares the experience that the doctoral candidates in reality are almost like an assistant professor working for free, evenings and weekends included. This is of course not the case everywhere.

### 2.3.2 Training during doctoral programmes besides research

The courses to be taken by doctoral candidates consist of lectures and seminars. After the first year they must pass exams (and attend classes) in three subjects (same as entrance examination); Philosophy of Science, foreign language and the chosen speciality. The exams in the speciality are considered to be the most important; still candidates need to pass all of them to be able to defend their dissertation.

### 2.3.3 Teaching during doctoral programmes besides research

As mentioned earlier, the doctoral candidates usually have to carry out teaching in order to earn their living during the studies. There is a tariff per hour based on experience and academic title but they get little paid for the hours.

At RIs the doctoral candidates do not teach (but they can still teach at universities) and are more involved in the institute's own research work.

### 2.3.4 Admission/recruitment

An application for doctoral programmes is filed to the name of the Rector of a higher education establishment and the Head of a scientific institution/organisation training doctoral candidates and should include the following documents:

- A copy of a duly registered diploma of higher education and relevant supplement (for people who received education abroad including citizens of CIS countries; a copy of the respective diploma as well as a copy of the certificate testifying the equivalency of foreign documents of education to the diploma of higher education of the Russian Federation issued by the Ministry of General and Professional Education of the Russian Federation).
- A list of scientific publications, inventions and scientific research reports in the event of the applicant having those – at the discretion of the higher educational establishment and scientific institution/organisation.
- A certificate testifying that the qualifying examinations for the Candidate degree have been passed (for people who have passed these qualifying exams abroad – statements of validity for the document testifying that the qualifying having been passed, issued by the Ministry of General and Professional Education of the Russian Federation).

- An ID document and a duly registered diploma (for people educated abroad – a diploma and a copy of equivalency thereof) of a higher education establishment is submitted by applicants in person.

Admission is carried out annually within the dates set by higher educational establishments and scientific institutions/organisations. For this purpose an ad hoc examining body is instituted chaired by the Rector of the higher educational establishment and the Head or Deputy Head of the scientific institution/organisation. Members of the examining body are appointed by the chairman from among highly qualified scientists and professors. The examining body reviews the documents submitted by the applicants, who then are interviewed by an assumed scientific advisor who afterwards informs the examining body of the interview results. A decision to grant a right to take entrance exams at the department is made by the examining body given the results of the interview; it is then communicated to the applicant within a week.

Entrance exams are conducted by commissions appointed by the Rector of the higher educational establishment or the Head of the host scientific institution. The commission includes a Professor or Doctor of Science in the discipline being the subject of exam. In the event of the Doctor of Science being unavailable the Commission may include a Candidate of Science, an Assistant Professor and, in case of foreign languages, skilled teachers without scientific degree or academic status having a good command of the foreign language.

Applicants to doctoral training take the following entrance exams in compliance with the State professional educational standards:

- A special discipline;
- Philosophy;
- A foreign language determined by the higher educational establishment or scientific institution, organisation and essential for the postgraduate candidate to do his/her research for the thesis.

No retaking of entrance exams is allowed. The entrance exams for the postgraduate course passed are valid for a calendar year. Persons who have passed qualifying exams for the Candidate degree fully or partly are released from the respective entrance exam.

The results of the final Master Exams in Philosophy and Foreign Language are reckoned as entrance exams for doctoral training in case the Master's curriculum provided for Master's exams on these subjects.

Persons admitted to take entrance exams are provided with a leave of thirty calendar days for preparing and taking exams with the average monthly pay retained to him by the employer. HEI and RI may in accordance with contracts signed with the interested enterprises, institutions and organisations, arrange a preliminary one-year probation period for postgraduate applicants.

The examining body decides, based on the results of entrance exams, on each candidate and enrolls the most appropriate for the scientific and teaching activities. Decision to admit or refuse to admit is communicated to the applicant within five days from the date of the Examining Body's decision but at least two weeks prior to the beginning of studies. Enrolment is finalised by the Order of the Rector of the higher educational establishment or the Head of the scientific institution. Persons who have joined full-time doctoral programmes are released from work by their employer in compliance with the labour legislation of the Russian Federation.

There is an age limit of up to 35 years for full-time and up to 45 years for part-time *aspirants*.

Admission to Doktorantura is competitive and available to citizens who are holders of Candidate of Sciences degrees and are already known for their contributions in their fields. Candidates must hold posts of responsibility in teaching and/or research testifying to the high level of their academic and scientific work and their capacity to substantially contribute to the solution of fundamentally important social, economic, and cultural problems.

### *2.3.5 Supervision system*

A scientific advisor (supervisor) from among Doctors of Science or Professors is approved by the Rector of the HEI or Head of the RI, for each doctoral candidate at the time of his/her enrolment to the studies. In some cases scientific councils of HEI or scientific and technical councils of RI may involve Candidates of Science of the relevant speciality having, as a rule, a scientific status of an assistant professor or senior researcher to provide scientific advice to doctoral candidates.

Doctoral candidates whose research entails two adjacent specialties are allowed to have two scientific advisors or an advisor and one consultant, one of whom may be a Candidate of Science. The number of Doctoral candidates assigned to one scientific advisor is defined, given his/her consent, by the Rector of the HEI or Head of RI.

According to some interviewees, the supervision system in Russia is in reality very individually decided and also differs between various scientific fields and institutions, depending on the culture of the institution, though formally the set requirements are meant for all. The Order 184 stipulates that the supervisor devote 50 hours a year/per candidate (they get paid for 50 hours). At some HEI this could be up to 75 hours during the first year. Scientific advisors get paid for 50 hours per doctoral candidate a year even if the candidate has two scientific advisors (advisor and consultant). The Rector of the HEI and the Head of the RI are entitled to increase scientific advisors' pay without any restriction.

It is very important for the supervisor how the doctoral candidate develops and succeeds since this will build on his/her reputation. The dissertation process contributes a great deal to the reputation of the supervisor and it is possible that he/she is not permitted to supervise again if the candidate is less successful. This functions in a pragmatic way as a form of internal quality assessment.

It is in reality often possible to change the supervisor if the candidate is not satisfied.

### *2.3.6 Doctoral thesis and defence*

The dissertation should be discussed internally at the host department, which must approve it (so called pre-defence by Academic Council). Then the candidate sends a 24 pages version (abstract) with the method and material and outputs covered. This should be published and sent out no later than one month (three months in case of Doktorantura) before defence to the library and other HEIs (and Internet). The dissertation is also submitted to two reviewers/opponents (three reviewers for Doktorantura) plus a collective reviewer (independent from other HEI or Research Institute).

Dissertation Councils are organised by VAK to assess dissertations in given fields of knowledge at those HEIs and RIs acknowledged for their achievements in the respective fields of science. They are standing bodies with a term of office of five years. A Dissertation Council is composed of holders of the Doctor of Sciences and the Candidate of Sciences degrees. The total number of its members should not be less than nine (usually 20-25). A Dissertation Council for the defence of the Candidate dissertation should include no fewer than three Doctors of Sciences.

VAK also decides on the quality of the research; for example it sets down the mandatory number of articles to be published and approves a list of scientific journals

where they must be published. Right now it should be 4 published articles for doctoral candidates (Aspirantura) or 9 published articles plus one monograph for post-docs (Doktorantura). The qualification requirements for the post-doc level are constantly tightened by VAK to ensure the quality and relevance of the research.

The defence of the dissertation is carried out in public. The doctoral candidate starts with an oral presentation (10 minutes) followed by opposition. The supervisor can say something about the personality of the candidate (workload, effort etc). Then the view of the collective reviewer is read followed by 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> opponent. After a discussion the voting starts (secret ballot). The members of the Dissertation Council can say YES or NO. A special commission takes away the box to count. YES from half of the members is enough in this part of the process. According to one interviewee, the council is usually not very active – “if the reputation of the supervisor is good and the opponents are positive, they usually approve”. Another interviewee presents a completely different experience with each member of the Council asking one or two questions.

All documents (minutes etc.) are then sent to the VAK, which will carefully study the conclusions of the Dissertation Council. If the Expert Council of VAK decides that the decision made by the Dissertation Council has been incorrect, it may submit the dissertation and the applicant's documents to a different Dissertation Council for additional evaluation (usually to an independent reviewer). The degree is awarded when the presidium of VAK reaches a positive decision. If failing, defence can be repeated in no less than a year.

The Dissertation Council for the defence of the dissertation for the Doctor of Sciences degree is also designated by VAK and consists of Doctors of Sciences.

The defence procedure for the degree of Doctor of Sciences (Doktorantura) is the same as for the Candidate of Sciences degree. The main admission requirements for defending the thesis are the following: scientific achievement in a chosen speciality; a complete outline for a dissertation; scientific publications; and the recommendation of employers including an assessment of the applicant's research. Admission of candidates to Doktorantura is the responsibility of the Academic Council of the institution and is based on scientific reports by candidates on the subjects of their dissertations as well as on individual programmes of research and on the conclusions of the departments or other scientific subdivisions of the institution. The subject of dissertations and the individual programmes and time-periods necessary for their completion are approved by the Academic Council. Proposed time-periods may not exceed three years.

The Dissertation Council receives the recommendations as to the award or non-award of the degree. The final decision regarding the award of a Doctor of Science degree is taken by VAK. Sometimes VAK includes one additional independent review (“the black opponent”), decided by random sample.

Doctoral candidates in creative arts present, upon completion of studies, a final thesis in the respective area that is renewed by a special commission appointed by the Rector of the higher educational establishment.

### *2.3.7 Quality assurance mechanisms*

The reputation of the higher education system is rooted in the Russian collective memory. The policies developed in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (the post 1917 revolution “mandatory education for all”, the 1930's creation of hundreds of HEI and the 1960's scientific and technological successes) that contributed to develop a fairly coherent and efficient system, build the system a good reputation in Russia and all over the world. However, the system was not and is still not homogenous. Two types of HEI would co-exist providing on one hand excellence education and on the other hand

mass education. At the end of the 1980's, among the 500 existing VUZ in Russia, only 60 to 70 provided international level quality training<sup>5</sup>.

After the 1990's reforms following the fall of USSR, the **quality of the Russian education** seriously deteriorated for mainly two reasons : the lack of funding and a huge scientific brain drain and ageing of professors and researchers led to a gap in 35-40 years old population. According to several experts, 20 to 30% of the training provided by HEI do not guaranty basic knowledge and competences needed to take over a job<sup>6</sup>.

The assessment of doctoral programmes is the same. Indeed, the quality varies a lot between universities in Russia, although the formal rules and requirements are the same. Furthermore, **corruption and fraud** is also widely reported in the Russian higher education system. Dissertation for sale<sup>7</sup> are an illustration of corruption and fraud practices that developed in Russia. There is a real industry involved in selling dissertations, addresses, contacts and prices can be easily obtained in the Internet.

In order to fight those phenomenon, VAK is imposing stricter rules and additional requirements at the doctoral degree level.

Two national bodies, the MES of the Russian Federation and the Russian Academy of Sciences are responsible for the general supervision of doctoral programmes in higher education establishments and research institutions, respectively. There is no independent quality assurance in place. VAK is responsible for regulating the doctoral education system and also controls the quality of doctoral dissertations. This is a kind of inbuilt quality assurance procedure; if VAK finds an approved thesis that does not live up to the quality requirements; they can start an investigation and in the long run close down the doctoral education at a university.

Scientific councils of HEI (departments) and scientific technical councils of RI exercise control over the performance of the postgraduate departments; they regularly hear reports made by doctoral candidates and their scientific advisors.

Doctoral candidates undergo annual attestation (by the section, sector, laboratory). A doctoral candidate who has failed to comply with the individual plan within the set dates is expelled from the department by the order of the Rector of the HEI or Head of RI. A doctoral candidate expelled from the department prior to the completion of the course can be reinstated for the remaining period of training by the order of the Rector of the HEI or Head of the RI.

## 2.4 After the graduation

Having completed doctoral programmes, candidates have an advantage when applying for a teaching position at a higher education institution or for a research position at a research institution. The award of the Candidate of Sciences degree leads to a salary increase or to a better paid position at a higher education or a research institution.

Doctoral degree is much valuable outside the academia as well. Within top management of both large private companies and public administration, a Candidate of Sciences is more or less expected. According to one of our interviewees, the doctoral degree has a status of a social "label". The Candidate of Science is a kind of a "social must".

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<sup>5</sup> Boris Saltykov (2008), *Enseignement supérieur en Russie : comment dépasser l'héritage soviétique ?*, IFRI

<sup>6</sup> *Idem*

<sup>7</sup> Osipian A. (2008) *Corruption in Russia's doctoral education*, Vanderbilt University

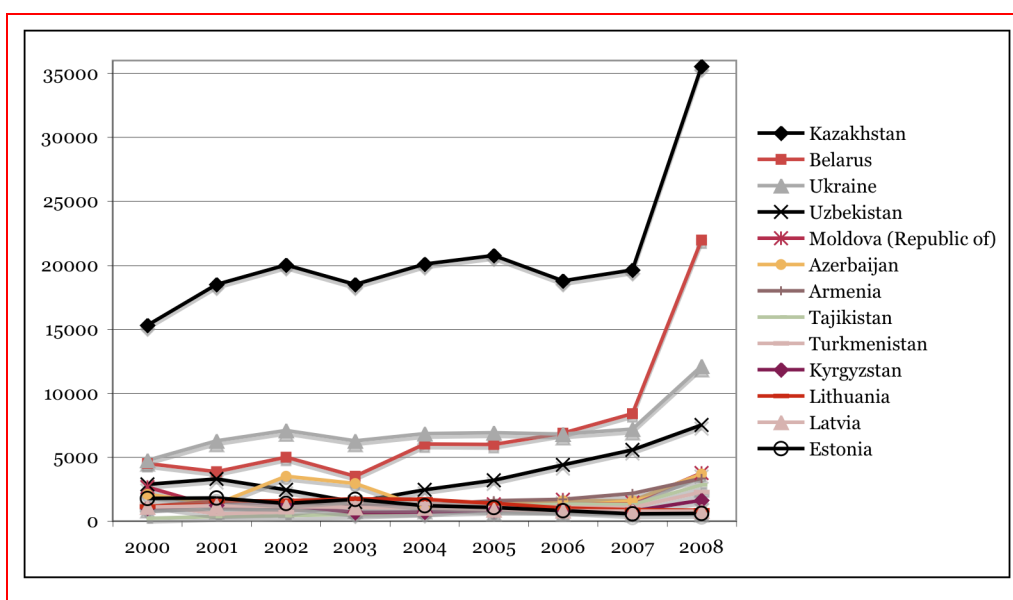
### 3. International collaboration, mobility and joint doctoral degrees

#### 3.1 International cooperation data

In 2008, Russia hosted 136,791 tertiary level students (ISCED 5 and 6<sup>8</sup>) from abroad as compared to 624,447 in the USA. Most tertiary students come from Asia (comprising Caucasus) with about 88,000 students, followed by Europe 41,500 and Africa about 6,000 students<sup>9</sup>.

The top three countries are Kazakhstan (35,531), Belarus (21,972) and Ukraine (12,101) followed by China and Uzbekistan (7,519) (Cf. Figure 4 in Appendix C - ).

Figure 2 Evolution in the international flows of mobile students at the tertiary level (ISCED 5 and 6) in Russia, 2000-2008



Source: UNESCO IUS

The participation of Russia in EU programmes is in line with the size of the country. Russia has been very active in the Erasmus Mundus External cooperation Window period 2007-2009 with 26% of participations and 28% of participating institutions. Two Russian HEI are also participating in Erasmus Mundus Action 1 “developing joint programmes of outstanding quality at Master and Doctoral level”, an action which only targets top HEI. With 112 participating early stage researchers, Russia is also making a third of total 23 EU neighbouring countries participation to Marie Curie actions in the FP6.

Finally, there have been at the moment only a few TEMPUS applications related to doctoral programmes. The national priority as regards TEMPUS projects lies on lower cycles – bachelor and master – to ensure compatibility and comparability of degrees and enhance academic and labour mobility.

<sup>8</sup> Doctoral candidates are ISCED 6 but no data is available for this sole category

<sup>9</sup> All data UNESCO IUS

### 3.2 Foreigners as doctoral candidates

The recognition (nostrification) of doctoral degrees obtained abroad is undertaken by VAK.

The Russian Federation is a Contracting State to the main international conventions on recognition matters: the UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas, and Degrees Concerning Higher Education in the States Belonging to the Europe Region; the UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas, and Degrees Concerning Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific; and the conventions of the Council of Europe on recognition matters. In addition, the Russian Federation has signed bilateral international agreements on the recognition of diplomas and degrees with more than sixty countries.

Foreign candidates not receiving a Russian Federation state scholarship are required to pay tuition fees which will not exceed \$ 300 per month.

In Russia, foreign doctoral candidates (as well as candidates of full cycle training, masters, trainees, and doctoral candidates) according to the rules of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, have no right to work outside the educational institution (and higher institutions are not able to ensure employment and decent income for many of them), though foreigners can work and very much wish to work for many of them are short of money because post-graduate allowance paid by the MES of Russia or university is not enough.

Table 2 Sources of funding for foreign doctoral candidates

Sources of funding for foreign doctoral candidates. %	Country of origin					
	CIS and Baltic states	Europe. USA. Canada	Asia	Middle East and North Africa	Africa	Latin America
<b>RF budget</b>	33.2	14.3	25.3	26.7	33.3	16.7
<b>National Ministries of Educations</b>	7.4	14.3	22.2	24.4	38.9	50.0
<b>Grants</b>	0.0	14.3	3.0	6.7	11.1	33.3
<b>Companies</b>	7.4	0.0	7.1	0.0	11.1	0.0
<b>Parents</b>	33.2	42.8	26.3	35.6	11.1	16.7
<b>Pay themselves</b>	11.6	14.3	19.2	8.9	0.0	0.0
<b>Sponsors</b>	7.2	0.0	3.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

The Russian Federation budget sources cover tuition costs for doctoral candidates largely for agrarian students, while foreign economics students are mostly self-supporting (data as of 2004). Every fourth doctoral candidate is paying for his tuition, as post-docs (amounting to 120 people) every fifth (2004). The average tuition cost is about \$2,145 US. A usual problem could be presenting the thesis in other language than Russian.

### 3.3 National doctoral candidates going abroad

National doctoral candidates in Russia are not encouraged in particular to spend time abroad during their doctoral programmes. There are no official limitations for doctoral candidates to study abroad, however there are practical reasons such as financial issues and foreign language competences that act as barriers for students to become



more mobile. It is common for researchers in general to remain at the same institution during the whole research career, although this is starting to change.

#### 4. Challenges and possible future policy actions

- There is a risk of **devaluation of degrees** due to a growing number of dissertation defences. At the moment the degree enjoys more of a social value (popular and important to mayors, civil servants etc) than a scientific value, according to one the interviewees.
- **Scarce state-level funding** which results in the difficult situation where the doctoral candidates must devote many hours to teaching and, consequently, the quality of research is suffering.
- **Brain-drain, ageing** of teaching staff, lack of financing for research, insufficient infrastructure and databases for research. Due to low salaries, a large number of talented professors have either migrated or left the academia in favour of work in private business or political structures.
- Many universities and research organisations are unable to deliver sufficient conditions for their postgraduate programmes when it comes to IT, literature, facilities and technical supplies.
- The **quality of research** within the field of Humanities is still low since this was neglected during the USSR time (priority on Mathematics and Engineering). Few candidates consider that their future career lies within research and teaching. However, in the couple recent years, the situation has demonstrated a change for the better.

In general the discussion on higher education reforms in Russia has so far has mainly concentrated on the lower levels and the third cycle is not really an issue for TEMPUS yet. Because of the uniqueness of the Russian doctoral system it is also difficult to get closer to the European system, if they want it at all. There are quite low levels of awareness of the lack of comparability. There is however a wish to increase exchanges of experience.



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## Appendix B - List of interviewees

Figure 3 List of interviewees

Name	Position	Organisation	Contact details
<b>Evgeny Imyanitov</b>	Head of the Department of Tumor Growth Biology	N.N. Petrov Institute of Oncology, St.-Petersburg	+7 901 3023707 evgeny@imyanitov.spb.ru
<b>Nicola Scaramuzzo</b>	Contact for Higher Education	EC Delegation in Moscow	Nicola.SCARAMUZZO@ec.europa.eu
<b>Anna Muraveva</b>	Deputy Director	TEMPUS National Office	<a href="mailto:muraveva2003@inbox.ru">muraveva2003@inbox.ru</a> +7 495 677 70 93
<b>Vera Zobotkina</b>	Vice rector	Russian State University of Humanities	Tel + 7 495 250 65 11 zobotkina@rggu.ru
<b>Tamara Salytjeva-Torstendahl</b>	Leader, Russian-Swedish Study Centre	Russian State University of Humanities	<a href="mailto:tamarats@rsuh.ru">tamarats@rsuh.ru</a> (495)680 63 26

## Appendix C - International flow of tertiary students

Figure 4 International flows of mobile students at the tertiary level (ISCED 5 and 6), 2008

Country of origin	Number of tertiary student
Kazakhstan	35531
Belarus	21972
Ukraine	12101
China	9187
Uzbekistan	7519
India	4314
Moldova (Republic of)	3771
Azerbaijan	3689
Viet Nam	3518
Armenia	3348
Tajikistan	2836
Malaysia	2516
Georgia	2510
Turkmenistan	2267
Kyrgyzstan	1636
Mongolia	1390
Syrian Arab Republic	1054
Myanmar	1034
Morocco	867
Lithuania	841
Latvia	797
Sri Lanka	688
Nigeria	667
Korea (Republic of)	661
Estonia	590
Lebanon	409
Israel	407
Angola	391
Korea (Democratic People's Republic of)	383
Zambia	374
Palestinian Autonomous Territories	355
Kenya	346
Turkey	345
Yemen	303
Jordan	297
Bulgaria	290
Cameroon	288
United Republic of Tanzania	280
Iran, Islamic Republic of	268
Peru	260
Congo	259
Tunisia	253
Ecuador	230
Afghanistan	228
Greece	218
Bangladesh	213
Iraq	212
Ghana	209
Germany	196

Guinea-Bissau	174
Mauritius	170
Côte d'Ivoire	162
Chad	160
Serbia and Montenegro	158
Colombia	155
Sudan	150
Japan	146
Equatorial Guinea	140
Brazil	120
Namibia	117
Pakistan	111
Guinea	108
Nepal	108

Source: UNESCO IUS

Technopolis France S.A.R.L.  
55 rue des Petites Ecuries  
75010 Paris  
France  
T +33 1 49 49 09 20  
F +33 1 49 49 09 29  
E [info.fr@technopolis-group.com](mailto:info.fr@technopolis-group.com)  
[www.technopolis-group.com](http://www.technopolis-group.com)