

2026 EUA-CDE Annual Meeting

Doctoral research and talent for the advancement of society

Hosted by the University of Galway
17-19 June 2026 | Galway, Ireland

Draft programme as of 27 February 2026

Research collaboration with societal actors plays an important role at doctoral level. In addition to collaboration already during the doctorate, it is a fact that a majority of doctoral graduates will pursue careers outside academia.

The topic of preparing doctoral candidates for career opportunities beyond academia is also deeply rooted in several Salzburg Principles and the 2025 EUA-CDE survey results show that most universities believe that doctoral graduates are equipped with key competencies that allow them to succeed in a variety of sectors outside academia. At the same time, university leaders see room for progress on parity of esteem for careers inside and outside of academia as well as the recognition of the value of the doctorate by employers. This discrepancy is one of the challenges that will be addressed during this year's EUA-CDE Annual Meeting.

Indeed, doctoral education's contributions to society through research and talent is currently receiving renewed attention in Europe and beyond. The topic of doctoral research and talent for the advancement of society is closely related to one of today's key priorities at the European level: strengthening Europe's competitiveness and the skills needed for Europe to succeed in this effort.

This makes it a timely occasion for EUA-CDE to offer the European doctoral education community a platform for exchange and to learn – and to share their own insights on the topic. During the conference, EUA-CDE will also present for the first time the findings of a 2025-2026 Thematic Peer Group on best practices in collaboration with societal actors.

While this Annual Meeting will focus on the doctorate's contributions to advancing society, for the 'common good', it will also address challenges that societal engagement inevitably brings, including possible frictions that universities and doctoral candidates might face when collaborating with non-academic stakeholders, as well as challenging transition phases for doctoral graduates that pursue careers outside academia.

Wednesday 17 June 2026

Pre-meeting sessions

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|----------------------|---|
| 10:30 – 11:25 | Pre-meeting session I
New to EUA-CDE |
| 11:30 – 12:30 | Pre-meeting session II
How European Universities alliances can support societal engagement at doctoral level |
| 12:30 – 13:30 | <i>Lunch</i> |
| 13:30 – 14:25 | Pre-meeting session III
Contributing to society through MSCA industrial doctorates |
| 14:30 – 15:30 | Pre-meeting session IV
Reforming research assessment & careers and the importance of societal engagement |
| 15:30 – 16:00 | <i>Coffee break</i> |

Annual Meeting

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|----------------------|---|
| 16:00 – 16:45 | Conference opening
Welcome address |
| 16:45 – 18:00 | Keynote I: What the doctorate offers to advancing society
Keynote II: The doctorate & society in today's European policy context |
| 18:00 – 19:30 | Welcome reception |

Thursday 18 June 2026

09:30 – 10:30

Plenary session I**How can the doctorate contribute to advancing society?**

In this panel discussion, experts will explore how the doctorate, the original research and the talent created through it contribute to advancing society. They will assess the vital skills and competencies doctoral research and talent contribute to today's knowledge society and discuss potential challenges encountered in societal engagement at doctoral level.

10:30 – 11:15

Plenary session II**Collaboration beyond academia at the doctoral level**

This session will present participants with the results of the 2025-2026 EUA-CDE Thematic Peer Group on 'Doctoral Schools: Building bridges beyond academia', which focused on collaboration at the doctoral level with societal actors. The report focuses on success factors and ways to effectively overcome potential hurdles when it comes to collaborating with the private and public sectors, non-profit organisations and international organisations.

11:15 – 11:45

Coffee break

11:45 – 12:45

Parallel sessions I

12:45 – 14:00

Group photo followed by lunch

14:00 – 15:00

Parallel sessions II

15:00 – 15:30

Coffee break

15:30 – 16:30

Plenary session III**Innovative approaches to supporting doctorate holders' career pathways beyond academia**

Doctoral education plays a crucial role in training Europe's future researchers and academics. However, an estimated 70 percent of doctorate holders will eventually pursue careers outside academia. This panel will explore innovative ways how universities can prepare their doctoral candidates for careers outside academia. The discussion will also address related challenges and how they can be addressed.

16:30 – 17:30

My university's greatest achievements in engaging with society at doctoral level in 180 seconds

19:00 – 22:00

Reception and gala dinner

Friday 19 June 2026

09:30 – 10:15 **Plenary session IV**
EUA-CDE plans for the coming year
Invitation to join EUA-CDE events in 2027

10:15 – 10:45 *Coffee break*

10:45 – 12:00 **Roundtables**

1. The need of interdisciplinarity and how to enhance it at the doctoral level

As society and societal challenges are not organised into disciplinary categories, there is a need to discuss how doctoral education can be more interdisciplinary. Participants will be able to reflect on the importance of and need for interdisciplinarity at the doctoral level, especially in the context of collaboration with societal partners. Furthermore, they will share experiences and good practices at their institutions.

2. How to shape doctoral education for meaningful societal engagement?

How can doctoral candidates respond to today's socioeconomic and global challenges. This roundtable focuses on how doctoral research can align with the 'UN's Sustainable Development Goals, as well as respond to new EU policy priorities such as the call to strengthen European competitiveness. Participants will also reflect on how universities can support doctoral candidates to engage with society and how they can ensure sustainable career pathways.

3. Transferable skills for careers beyond academia

Transferable skills are an important element of the Salzburg Principles and they have become a widespread feature of doctoral programmes over the course of the last 20 years. However, as the 2025 EUA-CDE survey results show, many doctoral education leaders think that universities can do more to foster transferable skills among doctoral candidates. Participants will discuss experiences and best practices at their universities.

4. Engaging with society at doctoral level and Open Science

Engaging with society, especially via collaborative doctorates, can create challenges for doctoral candidates as well as for their universities. This roundtable will explore one of these potential challenges: how academia's objective of Open Science could be affected by collaborative doctorates and approaches to managing potential challenges.

5. Transitioning beyond academia

While a large majority of doctorate holders eventually pursue careers outside academia, OECD data shows that doctoral graduates perform well on the labour market (i.e. high employment rates and remuneration). However, the transition from academia to other career pathways is often less than straightforward. This session will assess how

universities experience this transition phase of their doctoral graduates and how they address related challenges and opportunities.

12:00 – 12:30	Closing session
12:30 – 13:30	<i>Lunch</i>
13:30	<i>Social programme</i>