

# Onboarding doctoral candidates: the prevailing practices in Europe

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# The working group



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# The process



**December  
2022**

Defined goals  
and  
deliverable as  
a practical  
guide



**January-April  
2023**

Initial data  
collection  
among  
universities of  
working  
group

Identifying  
onboarding  
elements



**May-June  
2023**

Survey to  
extend data  
collection to  
European  
Universities



**June-August  
2023**

Collection and  
analysis of  
survey  
responses

Redefining on  
boarding  
elements



**September  
2023-March  
2024**

Handbook  
preparation

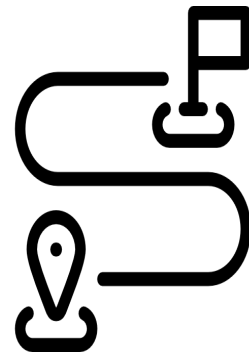
# Onboarding: definition & elements

**WHAT:** Activities and information provided during the initial phase of the doctoral journey.

**WHY:** Empower doctoral candidates to reach optimal engagement and academic success.

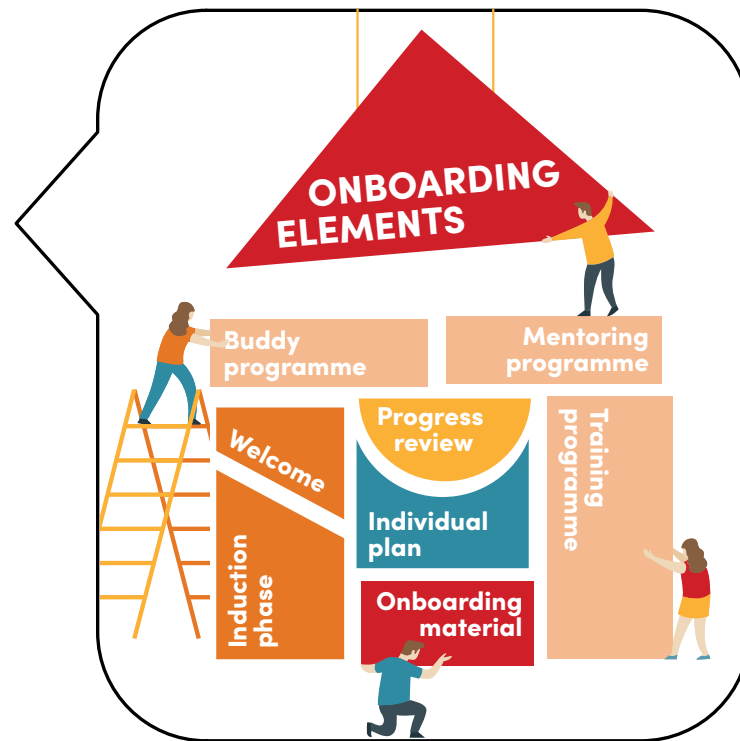
**WHEN:**

**START:**  
Admission



**END:** First progress review

**HOW & WHO:**



SCAN ME

to read the handbook

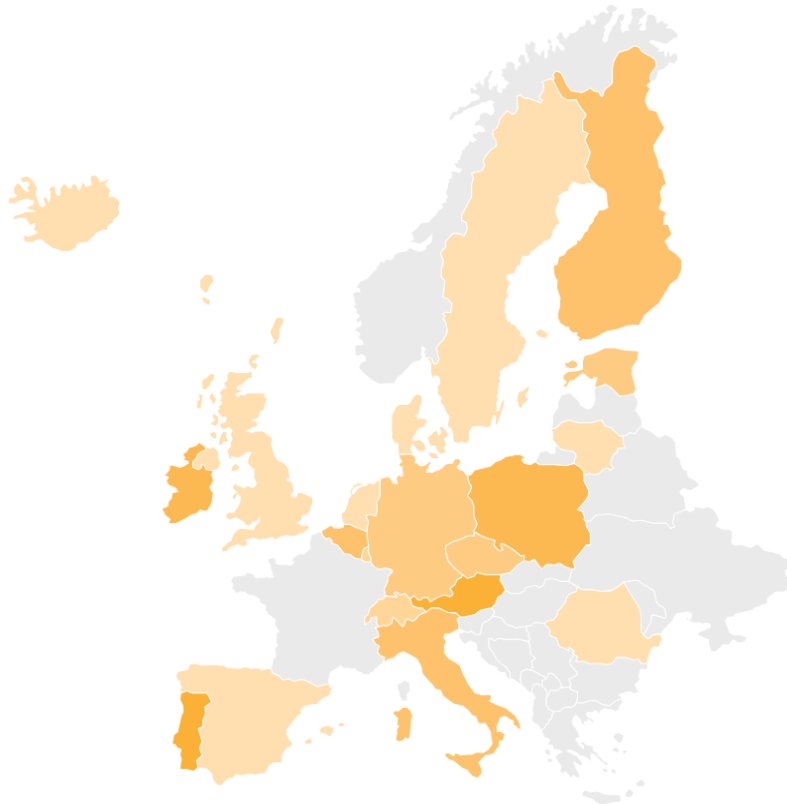
- Ongoing process
- Contributes to planning doctoral journey
- Bound to off-boarding
- Impact extending beyond the doctorate

# Survey respondents

56 universities

20 European countries

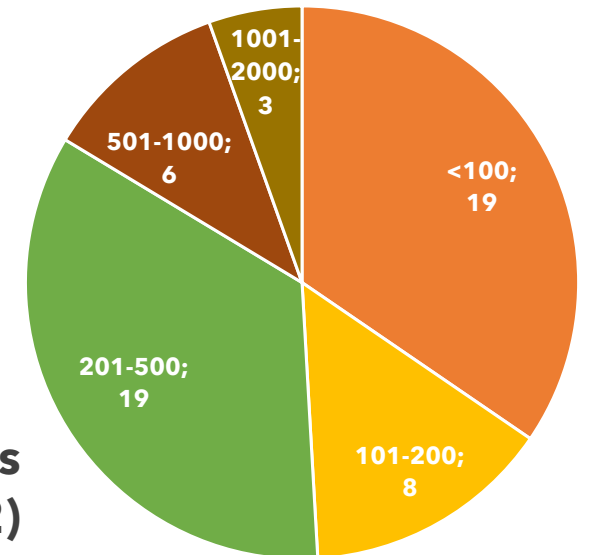
48/56 (85.7%)  
public universities



6  
5  
4  
3  
2  
1  
No. Universities

- ≠ Legislation across countries
- ≠ University structure and size
- ≠ Doctoral school(s)
- ≠ Timeline of admission
- ≠ Practices by disciplines
- ≠ Resources

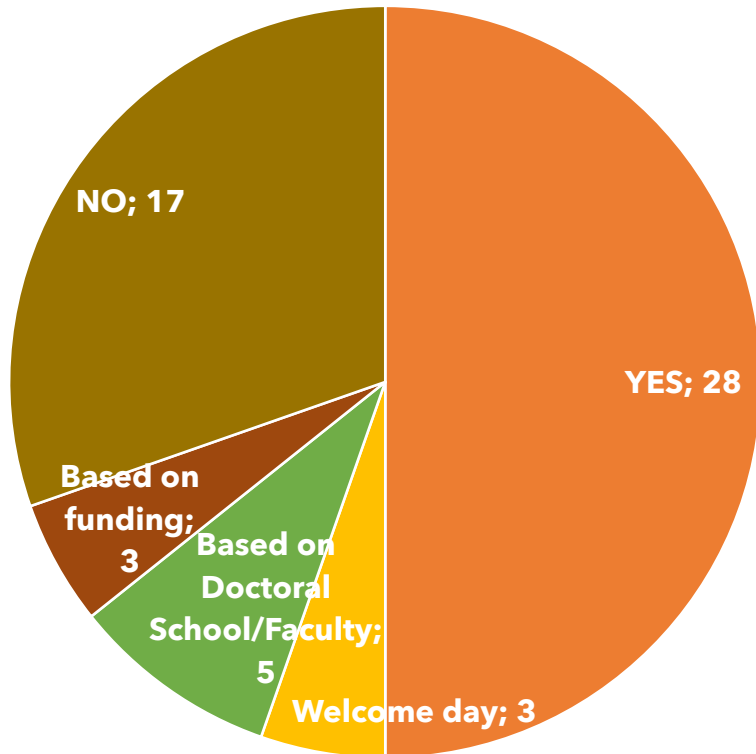
**No. new doctoral candidates  
per year (2022)**



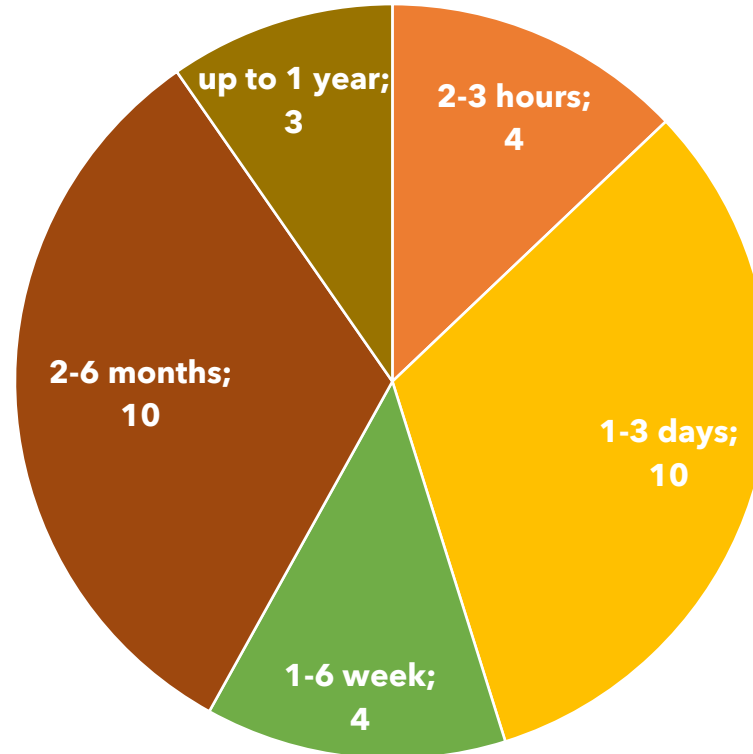
# Survey results: prevailing practices

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## Formalized onboarding process



## Onboarding process duration



(Co-)organizers:

- Doctoral school
- HR
- Doctoral Studies Office
- Academic unit
- Other support units involved

# Onboarding elements: prevailing practices

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**Welcome** 33/56 (58%) ↔ **Welcome + Induction** 31/56 (55%)  
**Induction phase** 37/56 (65%)

**Onboarding material** 36/56 (64%)

**Individual plan** 45/56 (80%)

**Progress review** 48/56 (86%)

**Training programme** 37/56 (66%)

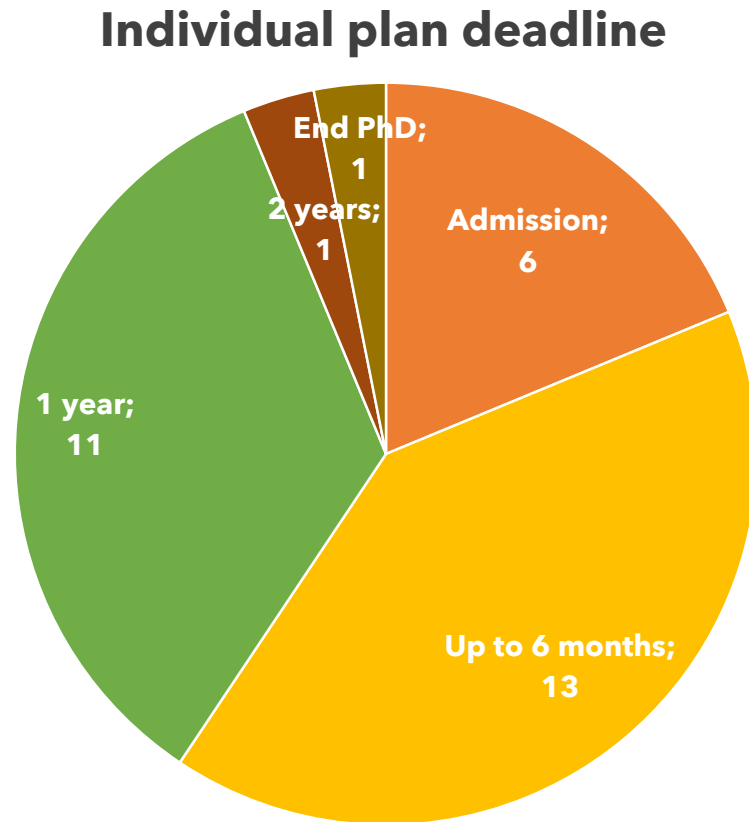
**Buddy programme** 17/56 (30%)

**Mentoring programme** N/A

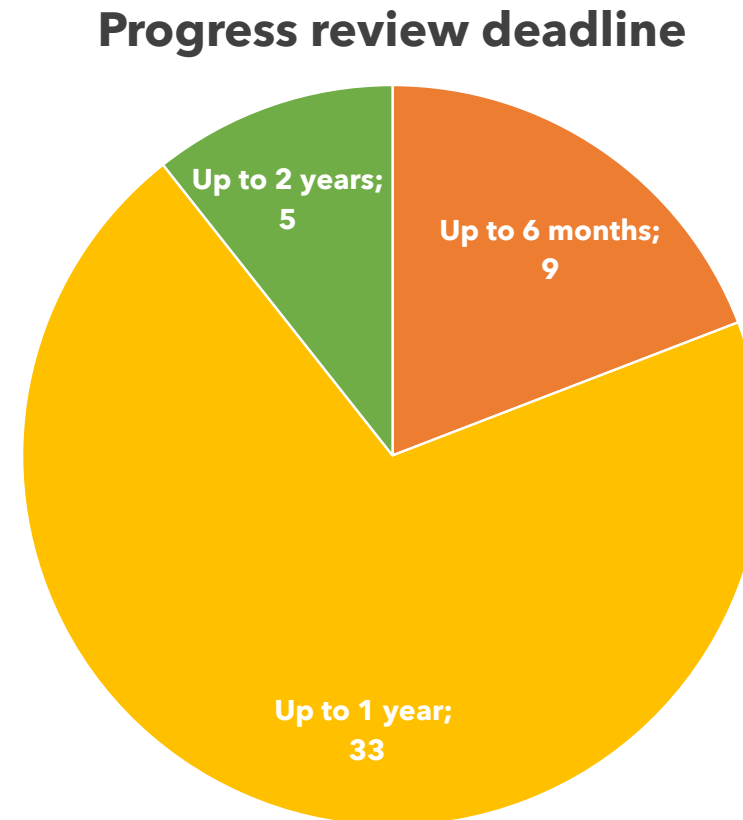
# Onboarding elements: prevailing practices

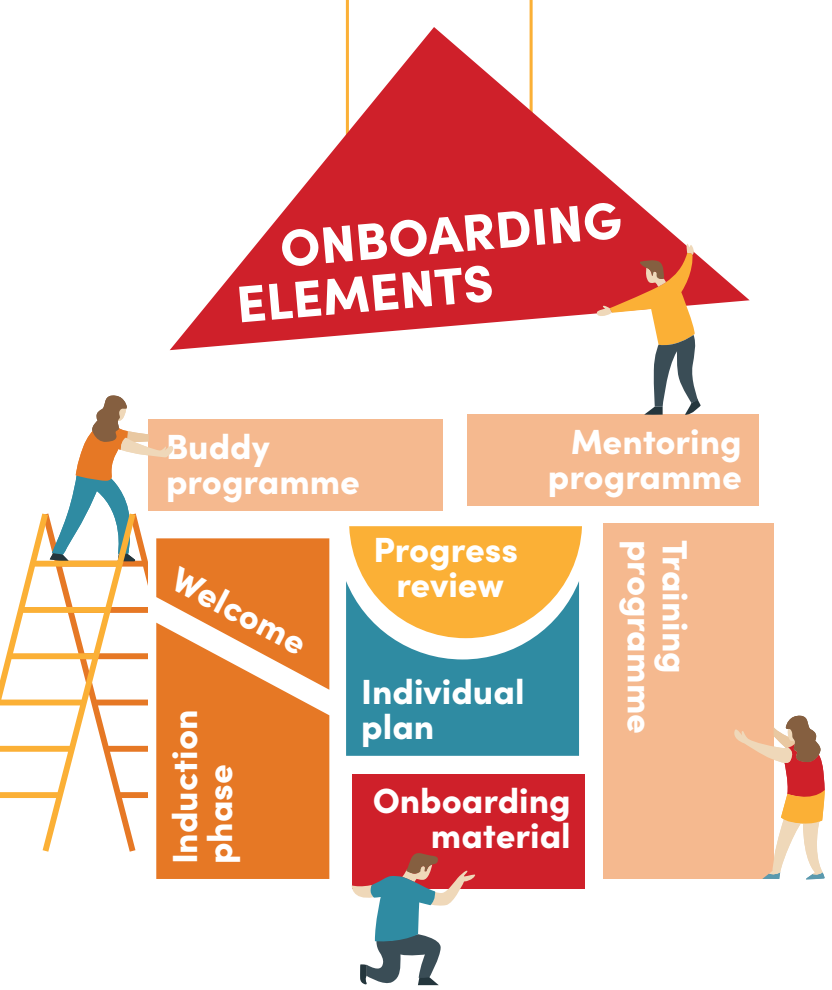
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**Individual plan 45/56 (80%)**



**Progress review 48/56 (86%)**





# Lessons learned

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Despite the diversity of practices, clear patterns emerged.

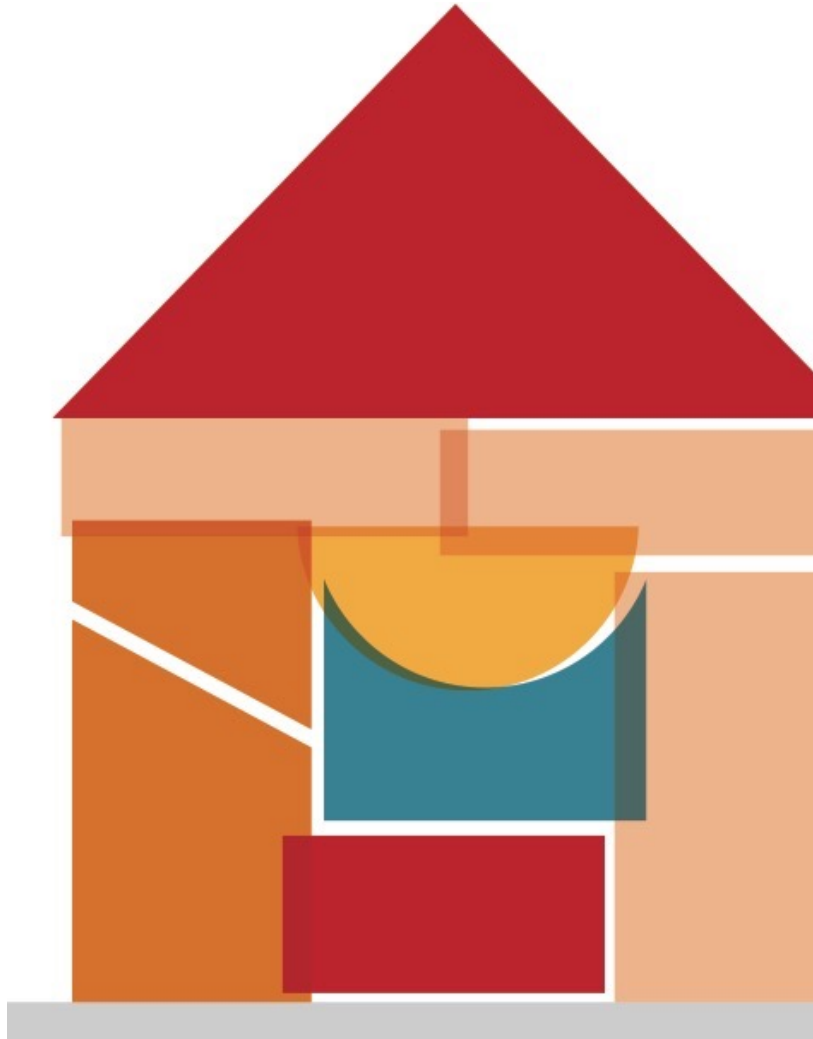
Takeaway from the WG experience:

- The importance of defining the keywords
- Clear structure for multiple authors
- Different practices contribute to the versatility of the material and sensitivity to local conditions
- Importance of specific examples in a practical handbook

In summary, the main advantages of onboarding processes for doctoral candidates are:

- contributes to expectation management and productive working practices between candidates and supervisors;
- clarifies regulations and doctoral programme requirements;
- provides orientation to relevant academic support services;
- contributes to building networks;
- develops the sense of belonging;
- increases well-being;
- increases satisfaction and completion rates;
- encourages an open mindset when thinking about future career steps.





# Thank you!



to read the handbook  
&  
participate in our call for contributions!