



## Bologna and doctorate training

# Modernising PhD training in Ukraine: report from a TEMPUS project

by Jan Petter Myklebust and Andriy Meleshevych

**Universities in Europe are experiencing great structural changes. From being elite institutions educating the few, mass education is the rule today.**

The Bologna process, now involving 46 countries in Europe, is the main driver of these structural changes. Since 2003, doctoral training has been one of the central ten themes that are monitored in the Bologna process.

Universities are coping with the following changes: the organisational setup of 'third cycle' degree training with greater weight on supervision and the introduction of research schools, 'training by research and not only for research' with inclusion of PhD students in research groups with a common theme, increased focus on international collaboration and mobility of doctorate students, the demand for joint degrees from politicians and governmental bodies, and a growing discussion of transferable and professional skills in doctorate training that will prepare the candidates not only for academic careers but also for work in industry and other organisations.

**Post-Soviet Ukraine is a typical illustration of such a divorce between research and education**

### **Soviet heritage**

While these changes are strategic challenges for Western European universities, they have revolutionary significance for

many Eastern European institutions, with a heritage of research training from the Soviet system and its sharp distinction between research at the Academy of Sciences and education at the universities. Post-Soviet Ukraine is a typical illustration of such a divorce between research and education. Yet, Ukraine has signed the Bologna Declaration, and stated it will also comply with the Bologna degree structure for the doctorate level. Until now, seekers of an advanced academic degree (candidate of science) had to be admitted to *aspirantura* or secure a special affiliation status at one of the research or educational establishments licensed to supervise such activities. Although post-Soviet *aspirantura* and Western-type PhD programmes are designed to pursue similar objectives, their underlying philosophy is vastly different. A lack of proper supervision and assessment, the virtual absence of research groups and close collaboration between aspirants and their academic advisers, and disallowing joint degrees, have led to low quality research, widespread plagiarism, and the extremely low publication record of young Ukrainian researchers in Western peer-reviewed journals.

### **Deadline 2010**

Ukraine is committed to introducing the third, doctoral level of training by 2010. However, many educational institutions as well as the ministerial bureaucracy lack a clear understanding of the organisation and philosophy of a Western-type PhD degree and the basic differences between this programme and archaic *aspirantura*. Some experts believe that this poses a serious obstacle to further reform of higher education in Ukraine. To put it simply, by 2010 when Ukraine is supposed to institute doctoral training, *aspirantura* may merely be renamed PhD without any major changes in the system.

### **Project objective**

This article reports on a TEMPUS-TACIS structural measure project: 'Training for the implementation of the higher education area third cycle in Ukraine', 2005–2007, which is perhaps the first significant attempt of a major Ukrainian university to put into practice the doctoral degree. In the project application it is stated: "Management of *aspirantura* at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy (NaUKMA), as in other Ukrainian universities, is ineffective. Though well-trained before, many doctoral students are not able to fulfil a dissertation and complete a programme successfully. Thus, excellent Master and undergraduate students become poor doctoral students or go abroad to fulfil their doctoral training. According to the 2005 Bergen Communiqué, Ukraine government has made a commitment to coordination its policy "through the Bologna Process to establish the EHEA", in which "doctoral level qualifications need to be fully aligned" and listed "creation of new principles of training at the three-level cycle degree" as the main challenge ahead of the country."





*Ukrainian TEMPUS site visit to Bergen, September 2007. From left: Gry Kibsgaard, UoB; Iryana Lukianenko, Head of Finance, NaUKMA; Halyna Vdovychenko, NaUKMA coordinator; Ellen Grong, UoB; Sergiy Kvit, President, NaUKMA; Andriy Meleshevych, professor, Dean of Law, co-author; and Prof Anatoliy Burban, Head of Membrane Research Center and Vice-President, Academic Affairs*

### **New model**

NaUKMA, one of the most prestigious and possibly the most progressive university in Ukraine, has decided to transform the existing *aspirantura* into a new innovative educational model. The respectability and innovative spirit of the university could make it a leading actor in transforming the third cycle education system in Ukraine.

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### **TEMPUS Consortium**

The TEMPUS Consortium consists of three universities involved in EUA's Doctoral Programme 2004–2005: Universite Pierre & Marie Curie in Paris (grantholder); Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and the University of Bergen (associate partnership), with the European Council for PhD candidates and junior researchers (EURODOC) as a partner institution. The project has appointed two external experts: Prof Alfredo Moscardini

at the School of Computing and Technology at the University of Sunderland and Prof David Salinger at the School of Mathematics at the University of Leeds. NaUKMA is the coordinator of the TEMPUS-TACIS project, which was awarded a structural measure grant by the TEMPUS programme in 2005.

### **Project site visits and output**

In May 2007, NaUKMA hosted a two-week workshop for faculty and administrators. Speakers from Universite Pierre & Marie Curie, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, University of Leeds, and EURODOC gave a solid overview of the Bologna reforms in the sphere of PhD programmes and shared their experience of doctoral training in their respective universities. In September, two groups of Kyiv-Mohyla representatives, including the university president, vice-presidents, deans, and department chairs, visited the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and University of Bergen to study on-site the organisation and practical activities of the third educational level. For Ukrainian educators both site visits proved to be highly informative and productive.

The overall project has two main goals: (1) gaining and dissemination of knowledge about PhD training abroad and (2) establishing a doctoral programme at

NaUKMA. At the time of writing, a major conference on the subject was about to be held in November 2007 at Kyiv-Mohyla. Along with international guests and NaUKMA faculty, administrators of Ukrainian universities and representatives of the Ministry of Science and Education will be among the participants. A volume with contributions from NaUKMA professors and their international colleagues focusing on different aspects of PhD training will be available for all participants. Discussion at the conference will help to improve our understanding of possible obstacles to establishing the third level of education at Kyiv-Mohyla as well as in Ukraine in general. Experience gained by NaUKMA will benefit other institutions of higher education in Ukraine which in a few short years should implement the Bologna principles. ■

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