

Home

Empowering Doctoral Candidates Through Personal Development Planning

In March 2013 the project "*Empowering Doctoral Candidates through Personal Development Planning*" was launched. This project is a joint venture between the [Matej Bel University](#) (Banská Bystrica), the [Comenius University](#) (Bratislava) and the [Center of Doctoral Studies of the University of Vienna](#). The project aims at contributing to a change of the PhD training perspective towards a primarily human centred individualized outcome of the PhD trajectory. Whereas previously the focus was on the written dissertation and other publications, today the young independent researcher, who has acquired a number of skills and competences and experienced a substantial gain through performing research and working independently, is considered as the major outcome of a doctorate. Universities have developed a variety of strategies to encourage PhD candidates to reflect upon and evaluate their own research experiences and plan for their own development. Influenced by the Higher Education System in the UK, the term Personal Development Planning (PDP) has become popular to describe this process. Several institutions such as The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) in the UK, have produced [guidelines](#) to promote PDP as a core educational process.

The benefits of PDP are manifold:

On the one hand, it improves the PhD candidates' research experience and encourages holistic thinking about performing research. Furthermore, it raises the PhD candidates' and PhD holders' awareness of their skills and qualities by providing evidence of personal and professional achievements beyond academia. More importantly, it enables PhD candidates to articulate their skills and take a proactive approach to their personal and professional development. Therefore, the use of PDP contributes to the employability of PhD graduates.

On the other hand, PDP may be used as a means for monitoring the doctoral candidates' progress both by supervisors and - more generally - by various university units such as doctoral schools or Quality Assurance units.

This project addresses the increasing need to develop personal and professional development support measures in universities. It aims at developing a set of guiding principles for a successful implementation of PDP practices, ranging from practical tools to communication routes for articulating the value of PDP and the development of appropriate policies. The project is funded by the [Aktion Österreich - Slowakei](#).

From July 8 to July 10th 2013 a workshop on Personal and Professional Development Planning took place in the Low Tatras, Slovakia. 18 PhD candidates from Matej Bel University, the Comenius University and the University of Vienna participated in the workshop and discussed and developed planning tools that should support doctoral candidates in the planning of their personal and professional development.

[Further information about the workshop](#)

From February 24th to 26th 2014 a follow-up workshop on PDP took place at the University of Vienna. This time the workshop focused on proposal writing. After a theoretical input how to write a successful proposal, participants will have the opportunity to write one common proposal and hand it in at the Aktion Österreich - Slowakei.

The programme and more information can be found [here](#).

[Here](#) you can download the proceedings of the project.

