Professionals in Doctoral Education First Findings

Authors: Allison O'Reilly and Lisette Schmidt | University of Vienna
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Content

1 Introduction

This report is based on a survey conducted by the consortium of the PRIDE project - a Life Long Learning project funded by the European Commission. The overall aim of this project is to **contribute to the professionalization of administrative staff in the field of European doctoral education**, in order to provide better support to PhD supervisors, PhD candidates and external stakeholders.

The **target group** of the PRIDE project is staff working on non-academic contracts in the area of doctoral education. The PRIDE consortium defined **Professionals in Higher Education specialized in doctoral education** as persons working in the higher education sector, having a **profound and holistic** understanding of the systematic level of doctoral education globally and being able to **translate their knowledge** for the benefit of their own institution and **doctoral education in general**. **Professionals are aware of the context of their work. They are well embedded** and **connected** within their institution and with their peers. They understand the great importance **to networking** with other sectors and with other institutions across Europe and globally. Professionals **continuously develop** their knowledge and skills. They have the **capability of identifying and solving problems** and **providing options** for the decision-making in the field of doctoral education and they make autonomous decisions within the limits of their responsibilities. Professionals contribute to the further development of doctoral education within their own institutions.

The PRIDE project comprises a thorough analysis of needs and gaps in doctoral education with respect to skills and competences of administrative staff. This needs analysis is done from different perspectives (staff, directors, stakeholders) in order to see whether administrators consider themselves appropriately prepared for working in multiple areas and conditions in doctoral education. Additionally a collection of best-practices, the development of a training course and the publication of the results of the project are envisaged.

This report is based on an online survey conducted in September and November 2014. The goal of this explorative analysis is to describe the roles, backgrounds, responsibilities, skills and knowledge of our target group. Additionally we aim at getting an overview on training wishes and how further training is conducted in this area. A further focus is the self-perception of people working in this area; do they believe themselves to be professionals and what does this encompass for them.

In addition to the survey, focus group interviews were conducted in order to complement the results of the survey and expanded themes that emerged during our analysis of the data. The results of the survey and the focus group interviews will provide the bases for the development of a training course for Professionals in Doctoral Education.

2 Background

2.1 Professionals in Higher Education

"There is little doubt that something has happened within university administration that goes beyond a purely quantitative increase in university administrative staff"[1]. Already in 2004 Gornitzka and Larsen describe changes in university administration which they believe *"shows many signs of a development towards a professionalised university administration"*[2].

In their studies on German Higher Education Institutions Schneijderberg, Teichler, Merkator and Kehm use the term **Higher Educational Professionals** (HEPROs) to define these new professions within universities.[3] They too have observed the phenomena of changing professions within Higher Education Institutions and designed a study to analyse this new group of employees. In their opinion, Higher Education Professionals is an umbrella term which they use for **"*all highly qualified persons within the system of higher education […] who neither primarily work as lecturer or researcher or in the leading management nor are administrative staff for routine tasks*"**[4] (translation by authors).
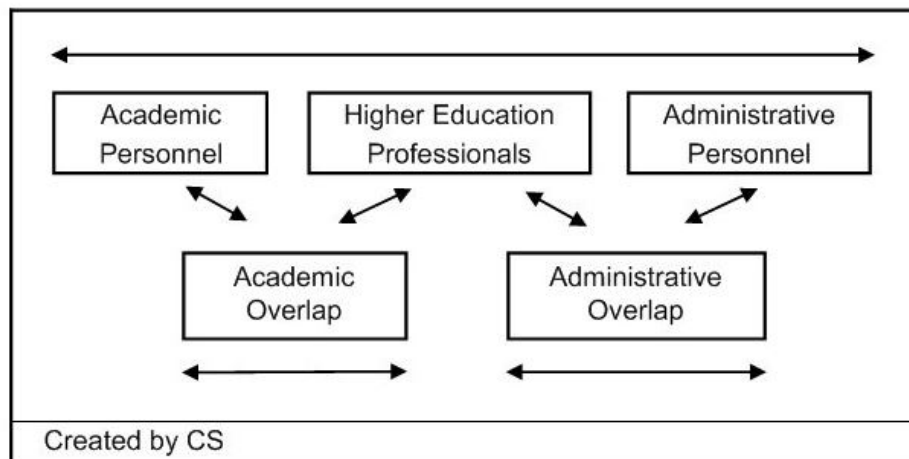

Figure 1: Overlap Model created by C. Schneijderberg [5]

Schneijderberg et al introduce the overlap model to explain the setting of these professionals. They explain that higher education professionals are situated between administrative personnel and academic personnel. The boarders are fluent and professionals need to have expertise in both areas.[6] *"In more general terms, the core activities of HEPROs [higher education professionals] are information gathering, processing, and distribution; support, service, and management which are classified*

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[1] Gornitzka, Å., Larsen, I.M., 2004. Towards professionalisation? Restructuring of administrative work force in universities. Higher Education 47, pp. 455–471, here p. 462.

[2] Ibid., p. 469.

[3] See among others: Schneijderberg, C., Merkator, N., Teichler, U., Kehm, B.M., (Eds.), 2013. Verwaltung war Gestern? Neue Hochschulprofessionen und die Gestaltung von Studium und Lehre. Campus Verlag, Frankfurt/New York.

[4] Schneijderberg, C., Teichler, U., Merkator, N., Kehm, B.M., 2013. Ausgangslage und Zielsetzung der Untersuchung der Neuen Hochschulprofessionen, in: Schneijderberg, C., Merkator, N., Teichler, U., Kehm, B.M., (Eds.), 2013. Verwaltung war Gestern? Neue Hochschulprofessionen und die Gestaltung von Studium und Lehre. Campus Verlag, Frankfurt/New York, pp. 9-32, here p. 9.

[5] Schneijderberg, C., Merkator, N., 2013. The New Higher Education Professionals, in: Kehm, B.M., Teichler, U., (Eds.), 2013. The Academic Profession in Europe: New Tasks and New Challenges. Springer, Dordrecht, pp. 53–92, here p. 80.

[6] Ibid., p. 79.

primarily as neither strictly academic nor strictly administrative work. These activities require academic training, knowledge and skills."[7]

Whitchurch introduces the concept *Third Space* to describe the emergence of new professionals working alongside academic personnel, but not being dedicated to research: *"The conceptual framework of Third Space between professional and academic spheres of activity is offered, therefore, as a way of exploring roles and identities in a diversifying higher education community, and also of considering the implications for individuals and for their institutions."* [8] Her findings are mainly based on studies performed in Australia, the US and the UK.

In contrast to Schneijderberg et al, Whitchurch includes also the role of academics who are moving into the direction of *Third Space* activities. This is of interest in particular since in our study several respondents related professionalism in doctoral education only to academics. However, in the PRIDE project we are focusing explicitly on professional staff on non-academic contracts, independently whether they have academic credentials and experience or not.

2.2   Professionals in Doctoral Education

Even though there has been a broad discussion on the topic "Professionals in Higher Education", so far little attention has been given to the area of doctoral education. Teichler[9] as well as Merkator, Schneijderberg and Teichler[10], for example, speak in their research on Professionals in Higher Education of different areas where these people can be found: in rectorates, the management of faculties, quality assurance units, international offices, career centres, transfer units, public relations offices and student services. The area of doctoral education is not mentioned specifically in any of their research. This may be related to the still relatively new changes in the way doctoral education is perceived as institutional responsibility in contrast to the traditional master-apprenticeship model. The establishment of organisational structures supporting doctoral education is still in process and professional support is often provided on the departmental level or related to specific funding opportunities. Nevertheless, the situation is changing rapidly, in particular in Germany, which is also reflected by the particular high response rate we achieved in Germany.

The EUA report *Trends 2010*[11] speaks of dramatic changes doctoral education has undergone in the last decade. The theory of the PRIDE consortium is:

> *"[…] whereas the need for targeted investments in the personal and professional development of PhD candidates, support structures such as doctoral schools, and higher quality of scientific supervision are widely accepted, proper investment in the professional development of administrative staff needed to support the overall endeavour is rather neglected. Thus the framework changed without taking the needs of a professional administration fully into account."[12]*

[7] Schneijderberg, C., Merkator, N., 2013. The New Higher Education Professionals, in: Kehm, B.M., Teichler, U., (Eds.), 2013. The Academic Profession in Europe: New Tasks and New Challenges. Springer, Dordrecht, pp. 53–92, here p. 80.

[8] Whitchurch, C., 2013. Reconstructing Identities in Higher Education: The Rise of *third Space* Professionals. Routledge, London/New York, p. xii.

[9] Teichler, U., 2008. Hochschulforschung international, in: Zimmermann, K., Kamphans, M., Metz-Göckel, S., (Eds.), 2008. Perspektiven der Hochschulforschung. VS-Verlag, Wiesbaden, pp. 65–86.

[10] Merkator, N., Schneijderberg, C., Teichler, U., 2013. Wer sind diese Hochschulprofessionellen, und was tun sie eigentlich?, in: Schneijderberg, C., Merkator, N., Teichler, U., Kehm, B.M., (Eds.), 2013. Verwaltung war Gestern? Neue Hochschulprofessionen und die Gestaltung von Studium und Lehre. Campus Verlag, Frankfurt/New York, pp. 91-121.

[11] Sursock, A., Smidt, H., 2010. Trends 2010: A decade of change in European Higher Education. EUA.

[12] Professionals in Doctoral Education: Supporting skills development to better contribute to an European knowledge society /PRIDE - Lifelong Learning Programme Application Form – 2013 Call for proposals, version: 31.01.2013, p. 16.

With the PRIDE project we want to contribute to the discussion of Higher Education Professionals by including the area of Professionals in Doctoral Education. In order to do so we want to identify and study already existing Professionals in Doctoral Education. With the help of our findings we are preparing the ground to later "provide tools and guidance in order to support current and future Professionals in Doctoral Education"[13] which may be used to develop trainings targeting at Professionals in Doctoral Education of different levels of expertise. This is linked to the belief that "an increase in the requirements for formal qualification and training to hold specific administrative positions"[14] will also affect the area of doctoral education. In that sense we are also aiming at fostering "the growth and formalisation of networks"[15] for Professionals in Doctoral Education while contributing to the creation of a professional identity in order to support an excellent, modern education system in Europe.

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[13] Ibid.,, p. 17.

[14] Gornitzka, Å., Larsen, I.M., 2004. Towards professionalisation? Restructuring of administrative work force in universities. Higher Education 47, pp. 455–471, here p. 462.

[15] Ibid., p. 462.

3 Methodology

The data collection for this report took place in form of an exploratory study gaining first insights into profiles, areas of activities, responsibilities and skills of people working in the area of doctoral education. It does not claim to be representative of all Professionals in Doctoral Education but rather a first step for further research in this area.

For the data collection a survey was created based on the following assumptions:

- In the course of organisational and structural changes within management and administration of universities (e.g. more autonomy in Austrian universities since 2002, more institutional responsibility in the field of PhD supervision, creation of graduate schools, etc) **more specialised personnel in doctoral education with specific job profiles is required/developed.**
- These structural changes are **not affecting all universities at the same time and scope**. Professionals in Doctoral Education are therefore **embedded in different organisational units**. This results in a **lack of a common professional identity** and language and a **poorly developed international network** among Professionals in Doctoral Education.
- The changes in the administration and management of doctoral education **increasingly request professionalised personnel to fulfil new arising tasks**. These Professionals in Doctoral Education are often not only "administrative executors" **but also consultants for top management and have room to develop and realise own projects**.
- This specialised personnel in doctoral education is highly qualified and has, apart from typical routine tasks, **the possibility to develop own ideas and initiatives**.

In the proposal for the PRIDE project we used three characteristics to describe our definition of professionalization in administrative staff based on the research of Gornitzka and Larsen[16] on university staff: "(1) an increase in formal status of administrative positions, (2) an increase in the requirements for formal qualifications and training to hold specific administrative positions, and (3) the growth and formalization of networks."[17]

The results of this quantitative data collection will help design the framework for our next step: qualitative focus group interviews with different stakeholders.

3.1 Development and Structure of the Survey

The survey was developed with help of different experts within the PRIDE-project consortium. Based on existing literature and questionnaires on similar topics, a first draft of the survey was developed in February 2014. A pre-test was conducted in June 2014 by sending the questionnaire to Professionals in Doctoral Education to whom we are in close contact but who are not part of the project. They tested the survey and added comments.

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[16] Gornitzka, Å., Larsen, I.M., 2004. Towards professionalisation? Restructuring of administrative work force in universities. Higher Education 47, pp. 455–471.

[17] Professionals in Doctoral Education: Supporting skills development to better contribute to an European knowledge society/PRIDE - Lifelong Learning Programme Application Form – 2013 Call for proposals, version: 31.01.2013, p. 17.

Overall, the questionnaire consists of 35 questions (11 of these are free text answers). The respondents had the possibility to skip questions, if they did not want to answer all questions. The structure of the questionnaire is based on four big topics:

1. **Background data** (on the current organisational unit, position and future career intentions of the respondents and on previous job experiences)
2. **Fields of activities, roles and responsibilities** (main fields of activities, interactions and methods of interaction with other relevant institutions outside the university and other professionals in the field of doctoral education, initiatives and projects developed by respondents, self-perception as a professional)
3. **Skills and areas of knowledge** (importance of different skills, relevance of different areas of knowledge, relevant fields of further training/education)
4. **Statistical questions** (gender, age, highest level of education, country of work place).

The respondents also had the possibility to leave their contact details, in case they want to be informed about the outcomes of the survey and would be available for a personal interview.

3.2   Selection of Participants

In order to find contacts for the dissemination of the survey, an email was sent to the Vice Rectors for research in universities all over Europe to ask for the names of their Professionals in Doctoral Education. All project partners provided lists with their contacts and did research within their network to identify further target persons who fit our definition. Additionally known mailing lists and newsletters were used.

At the end of the survey a link was provided in which respondents could add names of persons whom they would suggest for the next round of distribution. Thereby 74 new contacts were added.

After the first round of distribution of the survey, a first evaluation was done in order to get an overview of the represented countries of the respondents. Some areas and countries were strongly underrepresented (France, Scandinavia and the United Kingdom). For the second round of distribution the project partners intensified their research for contact persons in the underrepresented areas.

3.3   Distribution of Survey and Data Analysis

For the distribution of the survey we used the online survey tool of the University of Vienna (EvaSys).

The survey was sent out in September 2014 and again in November 2014 to further contacts persons. The survey was open for 2 weeks and we received in total 222 responses from all over Europe, Australia and New Zealand. The **overall response rate** was just below 32%.

As we intended to also invite some people to personal interviews at a later stage we also used this survey to find out who would be interested in such an interview. To make sure the questionnaire remained anonymous this question was not asked within the questionnaire, but there was a link to an external website in which they could indicate their interest in an interview and enter their contact information, which could not be linked to the questionnaire. 158 participants indicated their interest and sent us their contact details through this website.

The data was analysed with SPSS (version 22). For the open text fields the answers were grouped together and summarised into "bigger topics/categories" (which were then also quantified).

4 Results

In this chapter the data acquired through the survey will be analysed. In 4.1 we will have a closer look at the respondents – where are they from, what is their educational background, how old are they averagely and what is their gender?

The workplace, institutional setting as well as information on the vocational background and the attractiveness of the field will be analysed in 4.2.

In section 4.3 we will look at their job profiles – what are their main activities, how independent are they in their work, which knowledge to they have and what skills are needed to do their job. This will be followed by an analysis of the further development wishes and needs of the respondents in 4.4.

In 4.5 we will analyse one of our main questions: do the respondents regard themselves as professionals and do they fit in to the definition of a professional we describe in the beginning.

To ensure that the data analysis focuses exclusively on our target group, thus people in administration and management, we included a test-question in the survey in order to be able to exclude answers from non-target group respondents. For example those who answered the question: *What are the main fields of activity in your current position – Research supervision of PhDs* with "*often*" were identified as mainly researchers and therefore excluded. With help of this question the data of 38 respondents was excluded. When looking at the open questions we can see that most people we excluded actually mention that they mainly are researchers or vice-rectors – respondents we were not aiming at.

4.1 Who are the Respondents?

4.1.1 Countries and Areas

We received answers from 29 different countries and regions.[18] Germany is strongly represented in this study for the following reasons: first of all, we could find many contacts from this area and secondly, the response rate was higher than the general response rate. To make sure there is no Germany bias we always checked if the answers differ, when Germany is excluded. We thereby could see that this exclusion hardly ever changed the results, hence there is no bias. In the cases there is a bias, it is indicated. France having the second most inhabitants in Europe unfortunately is represented rather weakly. Here the response rate was extremely low. As the survey was supplemented by focus group interviews, we payed attention to counterbalance the lack of France in the survey by including partners form France in the interviews to have their perspective on Professionals in Doctoral Education as well.

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[18] As we mainly targeted European countries, all European countries were mentioned, countries outside of Europe were mostly clustered into regions e.g. "Asia including Middle East".
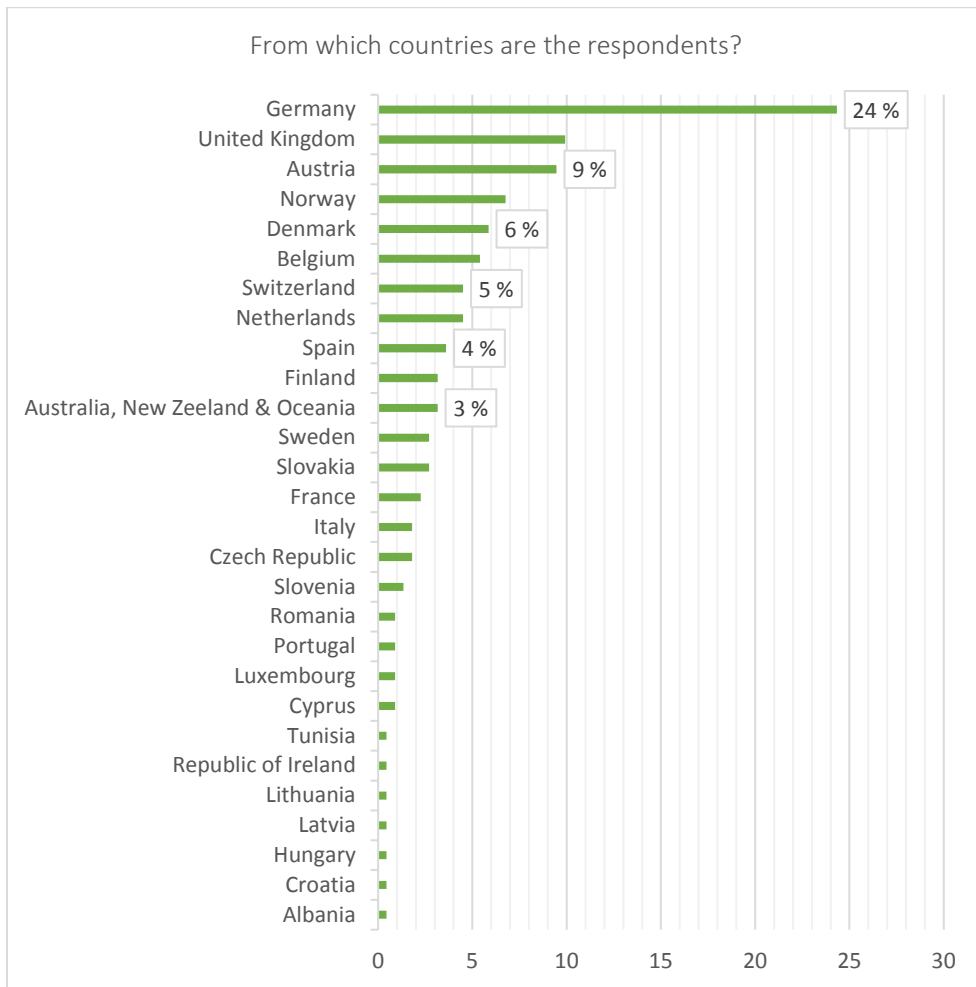
Figure 2: Country distribution of respondents | n=222

4.1.2   Education, Gender and Age

The education level of the respondents is high, around 50% have a PhD, around 38% have a Master's Degree and around 9% have a Bachelor. Only less than 2% completed Secondary School as their highest level of education.

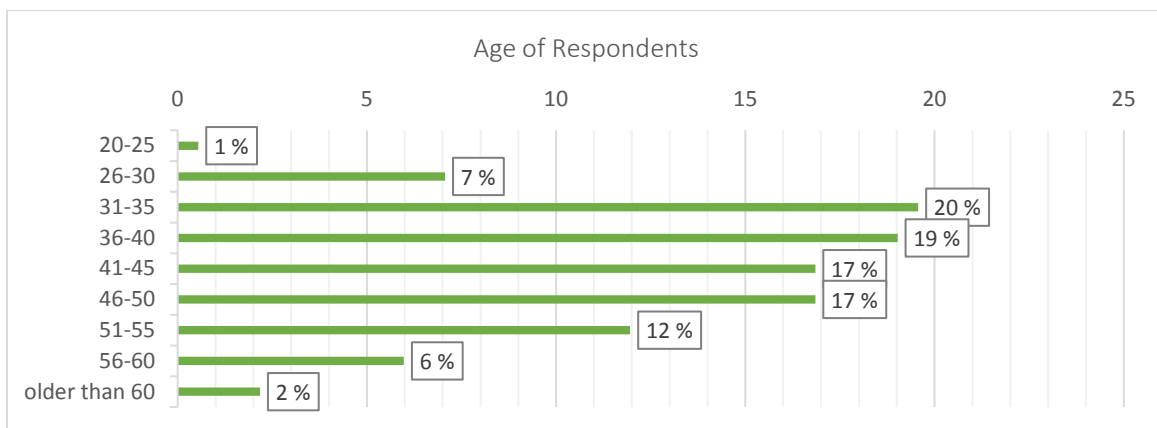Regarding the gender aspect, two thirds of the respondents are women and one third are men.

Figure 3: Age of respondents | n=222

The average respondent is between the age of 36 and 45, which is quite young. In their study about Higher Education Professionals in Germany, Merkator, Schneijderberg and Teichler made a similar observation. They too found there target group to be very young being at an average age of 45.[19] They explained this phenomenon with the fact that many new jobs are being created in this area and therefore these positions have only been held for a short while. As we had also asked about the length of time the unit the respondents worked in had existed, we can intersect these answers. Figure 4 shows a slight tendency towards an average lower age of respondents in units which have only existed for 1 to 3 years. The spread of ages is highest in the more established units, which have existed 7 years and longer. This could be due to a probable occurrence of fluctuation within the unit or because a more established unit may have a more diverse staff including clerical positions and professionals than a newly developed unit which probably is smaller in the beginning.
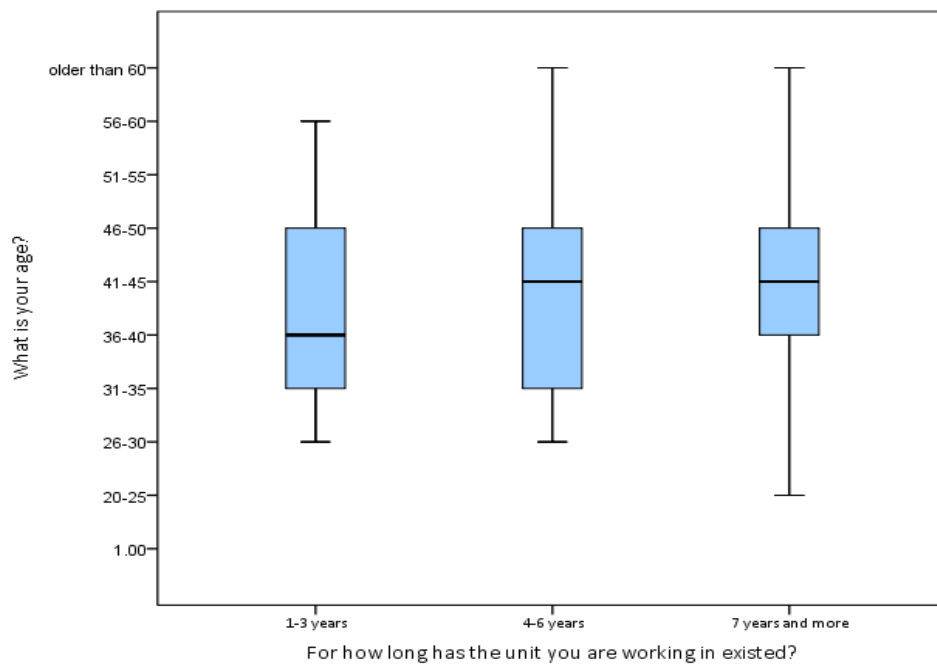
Figure 4: Age of respondents combined with how long unit has existed | n=184

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[19]Merkator, N., Schneijderberg, C., Teichler, U., 2013. Wer sind diese Hochschulprofessionellen, und was tun sie eigentlich?, in: Schneijderberg, C., Merkator, N., Teichler, U., Kehm, B.M., (Eds.), 2013. Verwaltung war Gestern? Neue Hochschulprofessionen und die Gestaltung von Studium und Lehre. Campus Verlag, Frankfurt/New York, pp. 91-121, here p. 91.

4.2 Work Place and Vocational Background

In this section we will focus on the professional backgrounds and the current work places of the respondents. We want to know which kind of people with which backgrounds are recruited for this kind of occupation and if we can see any patterns.

In addition, we will ask about their current work place – in which kind of unit are they located and for how long has this unit existed. This last question is especially important to us, as units working in the area of doctoral education, especially graduate schools are quite new.

4.2.1 Vocational Background

To learn about the background of current people working in doctoral education we asked the respondents in which sector they work and what kind of position their last job was and if this previous job experience is important for their current job.

In figure 5 we can see that nearly 80% of respondents come from Academia/Higher Education sector. All other areas are only weakly represented.
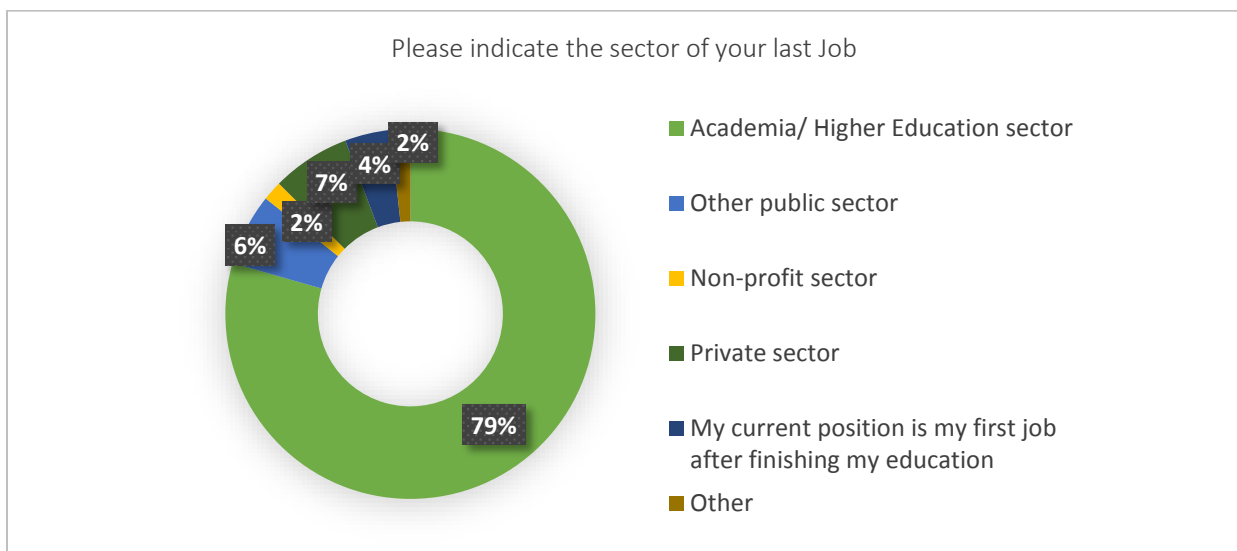
Figure 5: Sector of last job | n=176.

One of our theories is that especially when establishing new doctoral schools, staff is recruited from within the university and that "university careers" seem to be very frequent.

In chapter 4.2.2 we will analyse characteristics of the units where the respondents work. One question concerned the length of time the units has been in existence – 1 to 3 years, 4 to 6 years or 7 years and more. When we only look at the very "young" institutions – those which have only existed for 1 to 3 years - the percentage of respondents with a background in Academia/Higher Education even rises to 81%.

In general only few people are recruited from outside the academic sphere – only around 7% of the respondents have a background in the private sector. This result supports our assumption of "university careers" even more. This can also be seen in the next graph - figure 6. Here we asked which kind of position they held previously.

Figure 6: Type of job in previous position | n=176

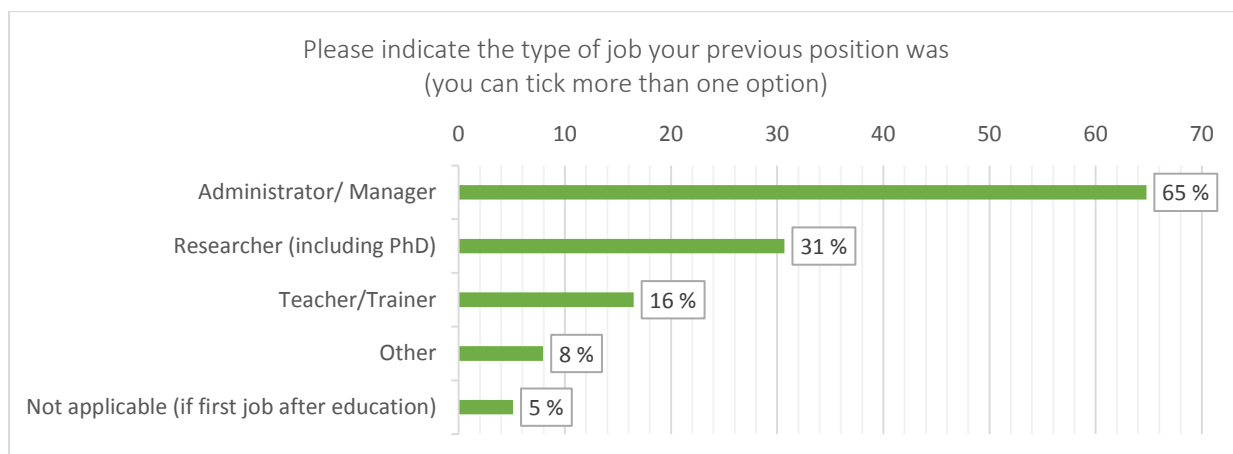65% come from an administrative or management position. This is followed by former researchers. This brings us to another assumption: **Professionals in the area of doctoral education are often former researchers who either moved from research to administration/management or are in this kind of position for a short time to help build up a unit before moving back into research**. This is also shown when looking at respondents from "young institutions" (in existence for 1 to 3 years). Here we can find far more researchers (around 43%) than in more established units. In chapter 4.2.3.1 we will shed light on the question if and why people wish to stay in the field of doctoral education. In the open text field in which we ask why respondents want to leave the field of doctoral education around half of the respondents mention that they will move back to research again or that research and teaching is a more attractive field to work, as the following quotations indicate:

> "I am an academic, I will return to what I have learned to do." (Quotation from survey results, question 1.14)

> "I find that research support is less satisfying that being a researcher, and would like to try and return to work as a full time researcher/teacher in the academy." (Quotation from survey results, question 1.14)

Another aspect in the survey was to what extent the respondents could use their previous experience for their current job in doctoral education. We assume that next to subject knowledge the area of doctoral education also benefits from many transferable skills and subject knowledge from other (university) areas. For only 4% previous job experiences were not relevant for their current position, while most respondents regard their previous experiences to be very relevant.

As we assumed, especially in new institutions, previous experience is of great help to establish new structures; and indeed 75% of the respondents working in an institution which was established in the last one to three years thought their previous experiences to be very relevant and 25% to be partly relevant. No one in this group stated their previous knowledge to be of no relevance (see figure 7).
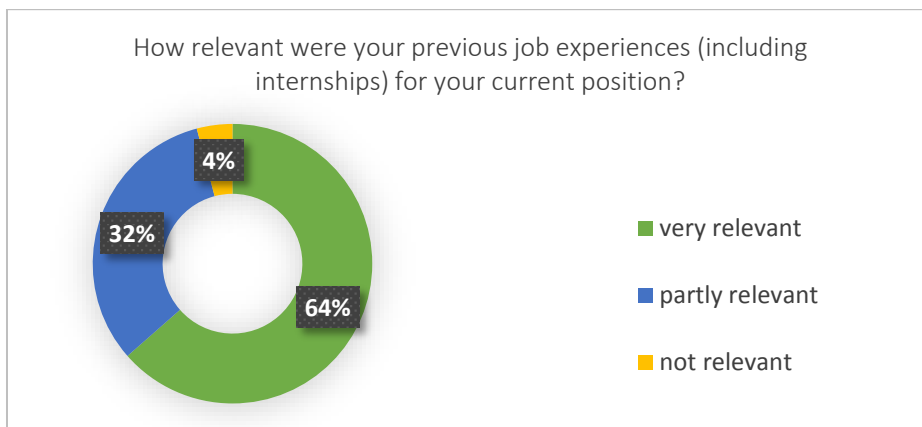
Figure 7: Relevance of previous job experience | n=176

4.2.2   In which Unit are the Respondents Situated?

This section focuses on the institutions where professionals work, how long the units have existed, what the job titles of professionals are and if they have a permanent contract.

4.2.2.1   Units

Support for doctoral candidate takes place in different ways and there isn't just one type of centralized unit, where professionals can be found. In some universities our target group works at the rectors office, in others they are located within the faculty and again in other institutions central PhD offices or graduate schools were established. Therefore, we also searched widely within the universities to make sure to capture the relevant target group. In order to show this diversity we asked the respondents in which organization unit the currently are working.

As shown in figure 8 most respondents are located in a graduate or doctoral school followed by research service units and umbrella organisations. Only very few are located in career centers or international offices.
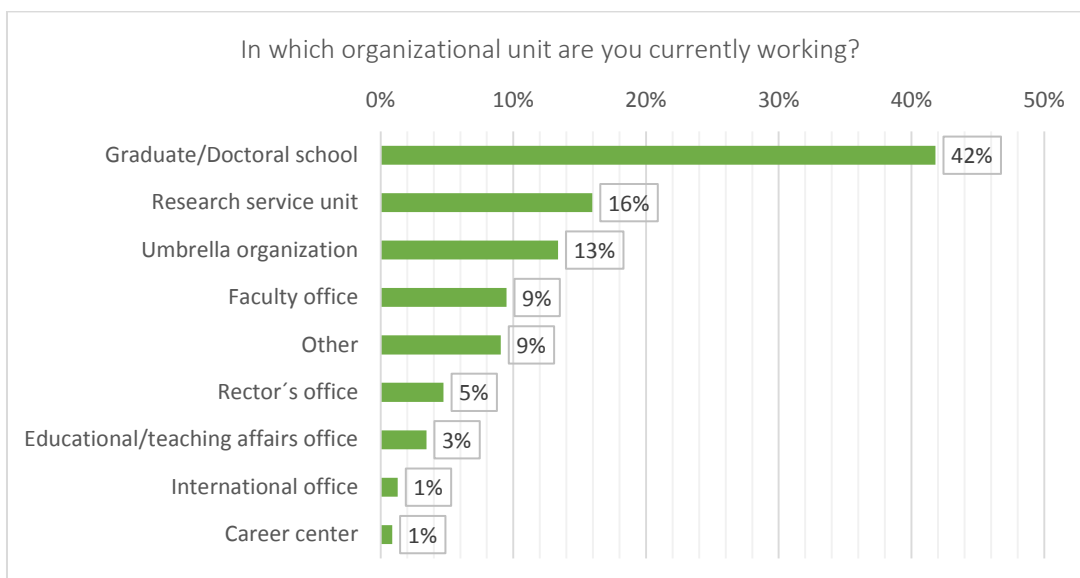

Figure 8: Currently working in which unit | n=176

Respondents ticking the box "Other" mentioned in an open text field the following organizational units: human resources department, international associations and networks of universities, student affairs

office, office of planning, analysis and finance or institute/department level (e.g. Department of Cognitive Biology).

The high amount of people in graduate or doctoral schools in our survey results reflects the European trend of creating structures to ensure the quality in doctoral education. In the last decade, universities have put enormous efforts into the professionalization of doctoral education. A major indicator illustrating this effort is the expansion of doctoral schools throughout Europe. This is a fast growing trend. Whilst in the EUA Trends V report 2007 29% of the interviewed universities state that their doctoral education was organised in form of doctoral schools[20], this number had increased to 49% in 2010[21].

As described in the EUA Trend VI report "*[the] changes brought to Doctoral education in the past few years have focused on the need to embed Doctoral programmes at institutional level by:*

- *Creating structures, such as Doctoral/research or graduate schools, in order to provide a dynamic research environment and create reliable quality standards for supervision and support.*
- *Introducing more taught courses and training elements to broaden the perspectives and competence profile of Doctoral candidates, including e.g. transferable skills provision, in some cases with credits attached, and without losing the strong role of the mentor."* [22]

4.2.2.2   How long has the Unit Existed

Units mainly dealing with doctoral education are quite new in many universities and countries. Around a quarter of our respondents are working in units which have only been around for 1 to 3 years. 50% answered that their unit has existed for 7 years and more.
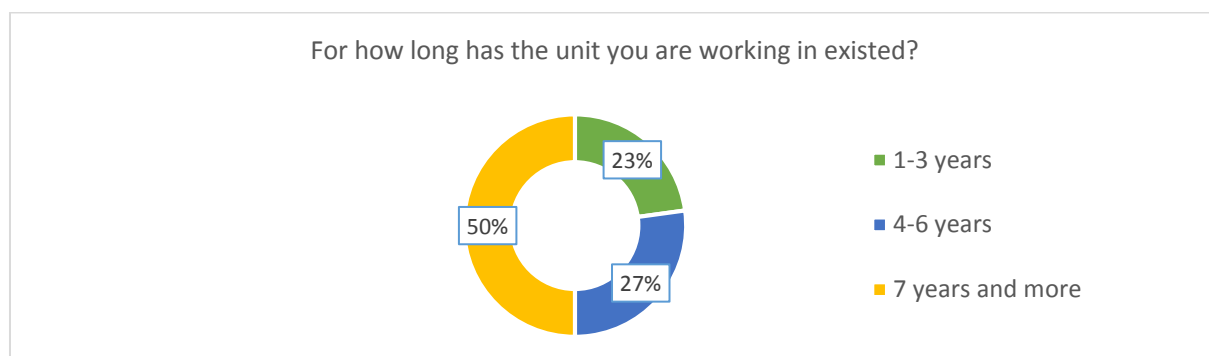
Figure 9: How long has unit existed | n=184

When looking at only the answers of respondents located in a graduate school we find that there are less units (only 41%) which have existed for 7 years and more.

4.2.2.3   Percentage of Working Time in Doctoral Education

Assuming the fact that there might be people who are involved in the area of doctoral education but also have to deal with other areas in their daily work we wanted to know how much of the respondents working time is spent for tasks related to the field of doctoral education. 75 respondents (=41%) spend all of their time working on the topic of doctoral education, 44 (=24%) respondents spend 80-90% of

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[20] Crosier, D., Purser, L., Smidt, H., 2007. Trends V: Universities shaping the European Higher Education Area, EUA, p. 29.

[21] Sursock, A., Smidt, H., 2010. Trends 2010: A decade of change in European Higher Education, EUA, p. 44.

[22] Ibid., p 43.

their time in this area and only less than 24% of respondents spend less than 50% of their time for tasks in this area of work.
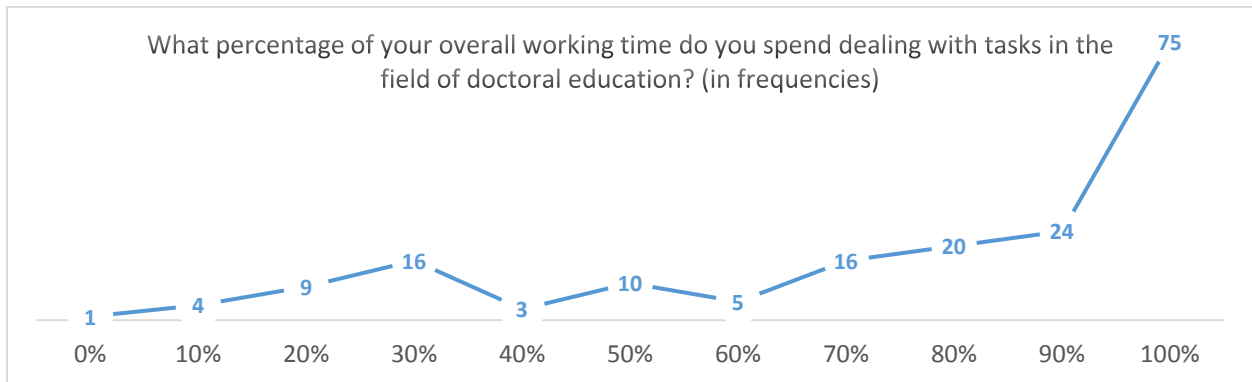
Figure 10: Percentage of working time in doctoral education | n=183

4.2.2.4   Job Titles

As 50% of respondents work in relatively new units (in existence for 1 to 6 years) we wanted to know about their job titles – do they have one and if yes, what is it. As shown in figure 11, the large majority (88%) states having a job title for their position. In the open text field 190 different job titles were mentioned, which reflects the diversity and vitality of the occupational field.
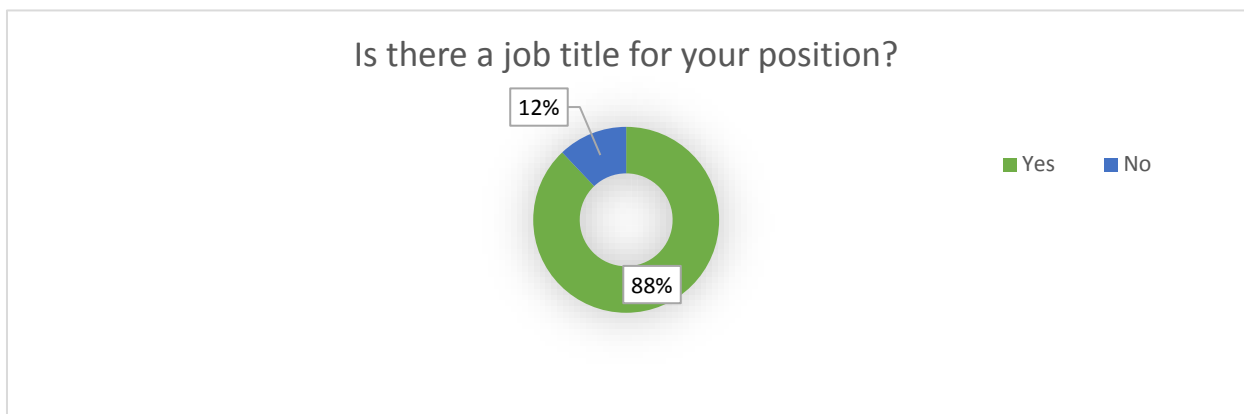
Figure 11: Job title n= 184

The study by Merkator, Schneijderberg and Teichler led to similar results: in their study, 754 Professionals in Higher Education indicated 579 different job titles. The authors conclude that:

> *"This demonstrates that this gradually developing occupational group which is on the verge of receiving more and more influence is by no means yet in a phase of vocational and organizational standardization."*[23] (Translation by author)

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[23] Merkator, N., Schneijderberg, C., Teichler, U., 2013. Wer sind diese Hochschulprofessionellen, und was tun sie eigentlich?, in: Schneijderberg, C., Merkator, N., Teichler, U., Kehm, B.M., (Eds.), 2013. Verwaltung war Gestern? Neue Hochschulprofessionen und die Gestaltung von Studium und Lehre. Campus Verlag, Frankfurt/New York, pp. 91-121, here p. 94.

4.2.2.5 Permanent Contract

Regarding the work conditions of professionals, 78% of all respondents have a permanent contract. An exception is Germany, where the area of doctoral education is marked by a lot of short time funding through the excellence initiative and DFG- calls. This also often counts for the people in administration who get employed for a project and not long term, which is reflected also in our analysis. Only 51% of the German respondents have a permanent contract.
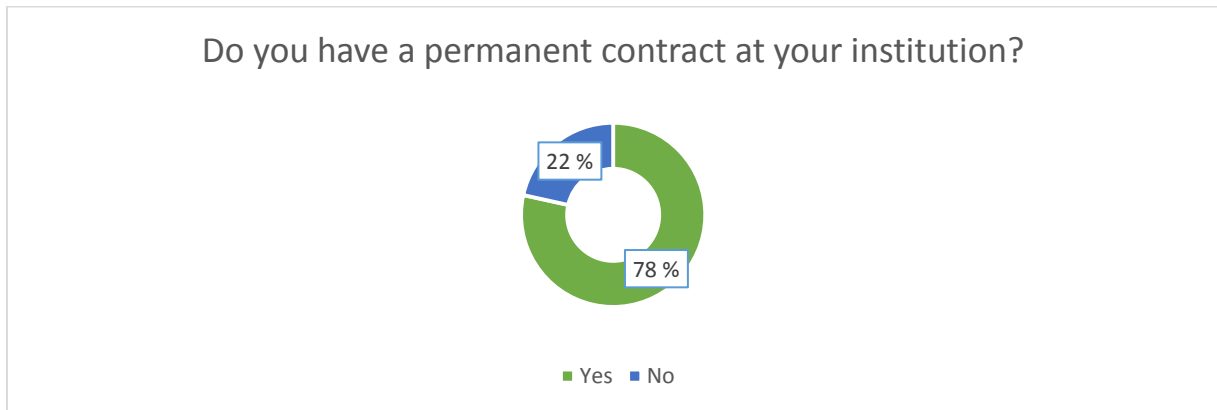
Figure 12: Permanent contract | n=181

Presuming that permanent contracts are first created once an institution has been established for some time, we payed attention to this aspect in our study.

When looking at figure 13 we can see that new institutions less often seem to have staff with permanent contracts than more established units. But there still are many employees in new institutions with permanent contracts (over 60%). Therefore our theory only holds to some extent.
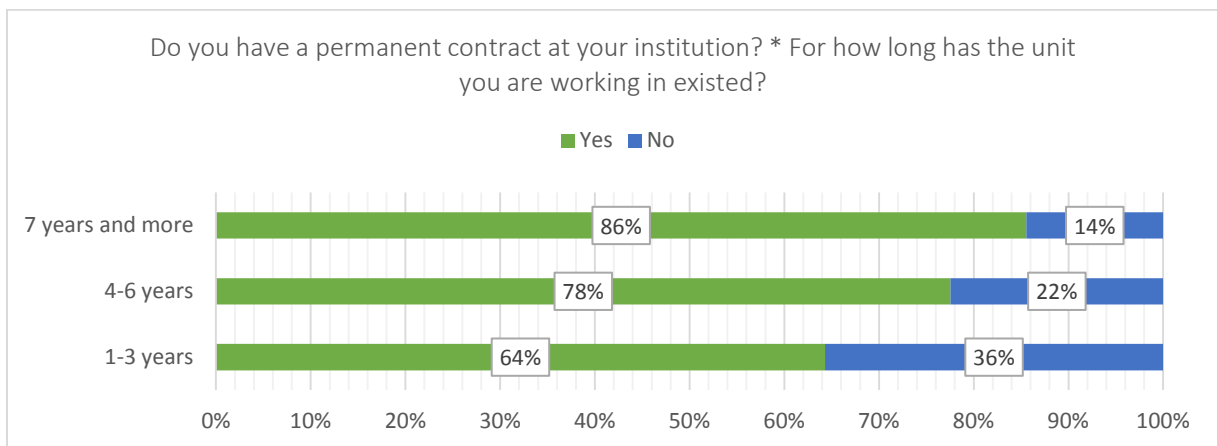
Figure 13: Permanent contract with how long unit has existed | n=181

4.2.3 Attractiveness of the Professional Field

In this section, we analysed the attractiveness of the occupational field. Why do employees wish or do not wish to stay in this field.

Think about your future career: Do you wish to stay in the higher education area in a non-academic position?

- Yes
- No
- No comment

69% · 13% · 18%
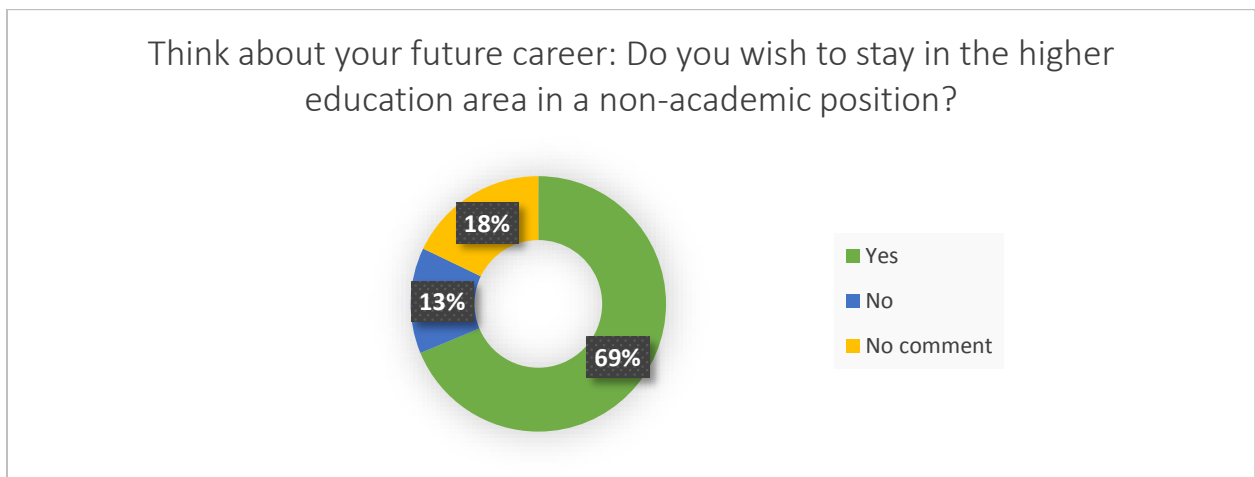
Figure 14: Future Career in Academia?

Figure 14 shows that 69% of the respondents would like to stay in the higher education area in a non-academic position, 13% do not see themselves in this occupational field and 18% didn't comment on this question.

4.2.3.1 Reasons to Leave

What are the reasons for wanting to leave the current position? 38 persons used the open text field to explain the reasons for wanting to leave their position. Looking closer at these answers we could identify four main reasons:

Topic 1: The wish to work (again) in academia as a researcher

Most of the respondents (17 persons) said that they prefer to work as a researcher and that they would like to establish a career as a researcher. Some of them also stated that they used to work as a researcher and will return to this position. Below you find some quotations which are typical for this topic:

> *"I find that working in research support is less satisfying than being a researcher, and would like to try and return to work as a full time researcher/teacher in the academy." (Quotation from survey results, question 1.14)*

> *"I like teaching and research more than administration-management" (Quotation from survey results, question 1.14)*

Topic 2: Job insecurity

Two respondents mentioned low or no perspective of a permanent contract.

Topic 3: Little career perspectives

For three persons this working area is not attractive because it offers little room to take responsibility as well as little career perspective. This is the main reasons for them for wanting to leave in their current position.

> *"I want to have more opportunities to develop my interests. I also want to be able to influence the content and form of my work more." (Quotation from survey results, question 1.14)*

> *"I would like to further develop myself (though I do not consider myself as a career type), but as a non-academic staff there are few opportunities for self-development."* (Quotation from survey results, question 1.14)

Topic 4: The wish to leave the university

Two persons indicated that a career in the private sector or sector outside university is more attractive to them:

> *"The question is not relevant at the moment. But, maybe, I will change into a new field, outside of HE administration. Rather in the frame of counselling instead of administration/strategy.* (Quotation from survey results, question 1.14)

> *"I would like to go back into the third sector and work in health promotion. I am also considering doing a PhD."* (Quotation from survey results, question 1.14)

The other respondents who did not fit in one of these categories highlight another fact that often occurs in the field of doctoral education. Some of the Professionals in Doctoral Education are working as non-academics but officially have an academic position. Or, they work part-time as a researcher and part-time in management. Therefore, a sharp distinction between academic and non-academics cannot always be drawn. Reality is often more diverse.

> *"My position is an academic position with a high proportion of managing task."* (Quotation from survey results, question 1.14)

> *"I'm not in a non-academic position because in France, you're not leaving your academic position when take another charge for example in doctoral education."* (Quotation from survey results, question 1.14)

4.2.3.2   Reasons to Stay

The next question in our survey enquires about the **reasons for wanting to stay in the higher education area in a non-academic position**. Summarizing the statements of the respondents, we can see the following four topics.

Topic 1: Attractive field of work (72 mentions)

For many professionals, the occupational field is interesting and gives the opportunity to work strategically and creatively. It seems that the diversity of tasks and the interaction with many different groups of people (PhD candidates, senior researcher, vice-rectors etc.) makes working in this field very attractive. Working in a team in a relatively new area where many career options are open is also mentioned in this topic area. Respondents see themselves as experts in a new field - thus there are better and more interesting career perspectives than in other sectors. Moreover, it is also appreciated that this field allows to combine managerial and administrative tasks with research and teaching. Policy development and the freedom to develop new initiatives and strategies are further positive aspects that were indicated.

> *"I find the work rewarding, interesting & enjoyable"* (Quotation from survey results, question 1.15)

> *"Higher education management is a growing field in academia as a result of professionalization needs. It also offers new career opportunities that are not available anymore in "genuine" research."* (Quotation from survey results, question 1.15)

"I am building national and international expertise in a fairly new and underdeveloped field within both international cooperation and PhD administration. This means that my job offers both intellectual and strategic challenges and contact with practically all our scientific environments." (Quotation from survey results, question 1.15)

"I like working in the higher education area, especially in the area of doctoral education. I like strategic planning and developing an area." (Quotation from survey results, question 1.15)

Topic 2: The University as attractive working environment (38 mentions)

For many respondents, the university is a good and stable employer and offers an attractive working environment compared to the private sector. Furthermore, many respondents consider the cooperation with researchers in all career stages as very positive and stimulating. The diversity of people with different views and needs makes the job at the university interesting. The job in the field of doctoral education is described as valuable as young scientists are supported. Many respondents identify themselves with the university.

"Higher education/academic institutions are dynamic working environments & and the work has a higher purpose, which is motivating." (Quotation from survey results, question 1.15)

"I have gained a lot of experience in this area, it seems logical to be able to keep using the experience. Higher education is a rather 'stable' employer, as opposed to industry, where companies sometimes need to struggle. So, job security is also a factor. Third reason: I quite like the higher education area." (Quotation from survey results, question 1.15)

"I prefer to work in a setting in which the ultimate goal is to serve ´customers´ instead of profit maximization. Moreover the universities have to undergo a lot of change to work according to modern business principles and I like to work on that." (Quotation from survey results, question 1.15)

Topic 3: High job satisfaction (26 mentions)

The third topic is related to the individual job satisfaction hence a more personal level, whereas for topic 1 and 2 the reasons for wanting to stay in a non-academic position are on the structural and organizational level. Many respondents indicate that the requirements of their position meet their strengths, skills and qualifications. Furthermore, it is described as very rewarding and satisfying to support (young) researchers. What is also mentioned is the fact that a good work-life-balance is possible. Below are typical quotations for topic 3.

"A good place for me to use my language and communication skills. Fulfilling to provide service and help to many different individuals." (Quotation from survey results, question 1.15)

"I enjoy working in the field of higher education and developing better conditions for young talents. Furthermore, I realize that this kind of work matches my personal strengths." (Quotation from survey results, question 1.15)

"In my current non-academic position it is much easier to find the balance between working life and personal life than in my previous position as a researcher." (Quotation from survey results, question 1.15)

Topic 4: Switch from academic to non-academic position (7 mentions)

Some respondents have worked as researchers and finally decided to switch to the non-academic area. In these cases, a career as a researcher is not deemed attractive for them and they rather prefer working in the non-academic area.

> *"During my PhD research, I discovered that I didn't really like being a researcher. However, I do fit in academia very well and my experience as PhD student is very helpful in my job." (Quotation from survey results, question 1.15)*

> *"After 10 years in a research career, I happily changed jobs. I'm no longer interested in an academic research career. The higher education sector is very interesting, so I have no reasons to change to a job outside HE. However, I do not necessarily want to work for the Doctoral Schools and/or at my current institution for the rest of my career." (Quotation from survey results, question 1.15)*

4.3   Job Profile

One goal of the PRIDE project is to describe the job profile of persons working in doctoral education. For this reason questions were posed on following topics: Which activities are they engaged in, what is their level of responsibility, which knowledge do they need to be able to do their job and which skills are required? This information can serve as a basis for job profiles of people in this area of work.

Schneijderberg et al. believe Higher Education Professionals are to be understood as experts who assume more and more complex tasks in decision-making processes, support and services but they also assume tasks in the shaping of the university itself. [24] According to them the ability to exercise these tasks successfully a good knowledge of the core business of research is necessary in order to support the scientific environment. We will look at the tasks also with regard to this statement. Are professionals involved in decision-making processes and the shaping of the university and which knowledge is needed for this?

4.3.1   What are the Activities of Professionals?

The survey provided a list of possible activities which was complemented by an open text field to make sure that all important activities we may have missed could be added by the respondents. Figure 15 shows the list of activities sorted by how many respondents chose the specification "often" when asked if a certain activity is a main field in their work. As we can see, the activity which was mentioned by most respondents as done often is *Policy development within the university*.

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[24] Schneijderberg, C., Teichler, U., Merkator, N., Kehm, B.M., 2013. Ausgangslage und Zielsetzung der Untersuchung der Neuen Hochschulprofessionen, in: Schneijderberg, C., Merkator, N., Teichler, U., Kehm, B.M., (Eds.), 2013. Verwaltung war Gestern? Neue Hochschulprofessionen und die Gestaltung von Studium und Lehre, Schwerpunktreihe Hochschule und Beruf. Campus Verlag, Frankfurt/New York, pp. 9-32, here p. 9.
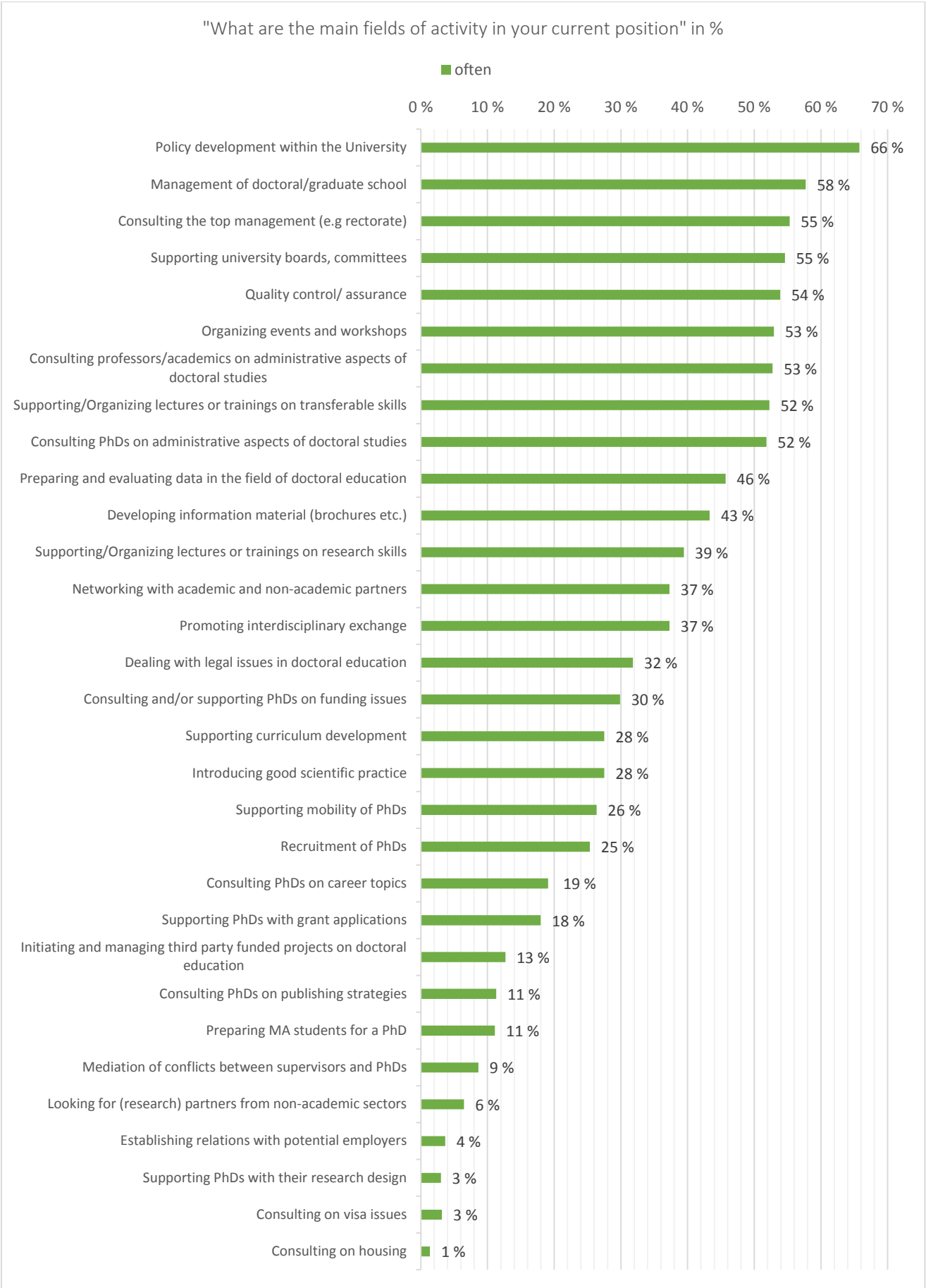
"What are the main fields of activity in your current position" in %

■ often

Field	%
Policy development within the University	66 %
Management of doctoral/graduate school	58 %
Consulting the top management (e.g rectorate)	55 %
Supporting university boards, committees	55 %
Quality control/ assurance	54 %
Organizing events and workshops	53 %
Consulting professors/academics on administrative aspects of doctoral studies	53 %
Supporting/Organizing lectures or trainings on transferable skills	52 %
Consulting PhDs on administrative aspects of doctoral studies	52 %
Preparing and evaluating data in the field of doctoral education	46 %
Developing information material (brochures etc.)	43 %
Supporting/Organizing lectures or trainings on research skills	39 %
Networking with academic and non-academic partners	37 %
Promoting interdisciplinary exchange	37 %
Dealing with legal issues in doctoral education	32 %
Consulting and/or supporting PhDs on funding issues	30 %
Supporting curriculum development	28 %
Introducing good scientific practice	28 %
Supporting mobility of PhDs	26 %
Recruitment of PhDs	25 %
Consulting PhDs on career topics	19 %
Supporting PhDs with grant applications	18 %
Initiating and managing third party funded projects on doctoral education	13 %
Consulting PhDs on publishing strategies	11 %
Preparing MA students for a PhD	11 %
Mediation of conflicts between supervisors and PhDs	9 %
Looking for (research) partners from non-academic sectors	6 %
Establishing relations with potential employers	4 %
Supporting PhDs with their research design	3 %
Consulting on visa issues	3 %
Consulting on housing	1 %

Figure 15: What are the main fields of activities in your current position | n=183

In our analysis we clustered these activities into the following five main activity areas to be able to better analyse them:

1. Career support *(= supporting/organizing lectures or trainings on transferable skills, looking for research partners, consulting PhDs on career topics, establishing relations with potential employers)*
2. Policy - support for decision makers *(= policy development within the university, consulting the top management, dealing with legal issues in doctoral education, supporting university boards and committees, management of doctoral/graduate school, quality control/assurance, initiating and managing third party funded projects on doctoral education, preparing and evaluating data in the field of doctoral education, supporting curriculum development, networking with academic and non-academic partners)*
3. Support in research issues *(= preparing MA students for a PhD, consulting PhDs on publishing strategies, supporting PhDs with grant applications, supporting PhDs with their research design, supporting/organizing lectures ore trainings on research skills, research supervision of PhDs, introducing good scientific practice, promoting interdisciplinary exchange)*
4. Consultation for PhDs, supervisors (= *recruitment of PhDs, consulting and/or supporting PhDs on funding issues, consulting PhDs on administrative aspects of doctoral studies, consulting professors/academics on administrative aspects of doctoral studies, mediation of conflicts between supervisors and PhDs, developing information material, organizing events and workshops*)
5. Activities mainly for international PhDs *(= consulting on visa issues, consulting on housing, supporting mobility)*

We will now look at these clusters individually.
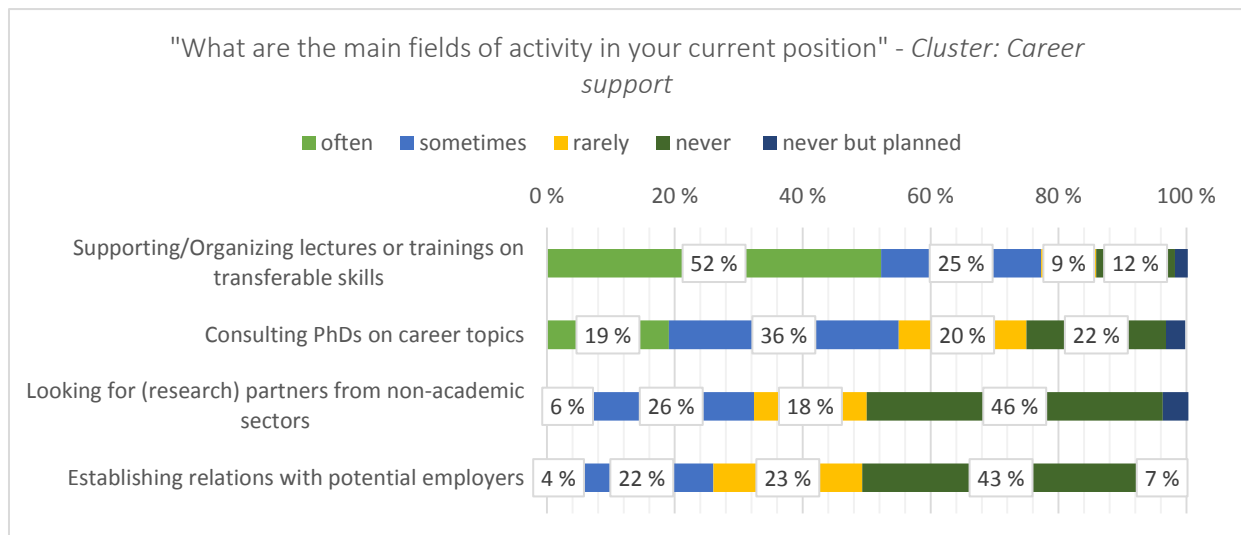
4.3.1.1 Career Support

Figure 16: Fields of activity – Cluster: Career support | n=183

In figure 16 we can see that the *support and/or organisation of lectures or trainings on transferable skills* is the activity which is done most often in this cluster. Nearly 80% of the respondents stated to do this sometimes or often. Only 12 % state that they never support or organize lectures or trainings on transferable skills. If we look at the other statements we find activities which are done only by a small number of professionals as for instance looking for (research) partners from the non-academic

sector and establish relations with potential employers. These are activities which 50-60% rarely or never do. 7% state they plan activities in the area *Establishing relations with potential employers*.
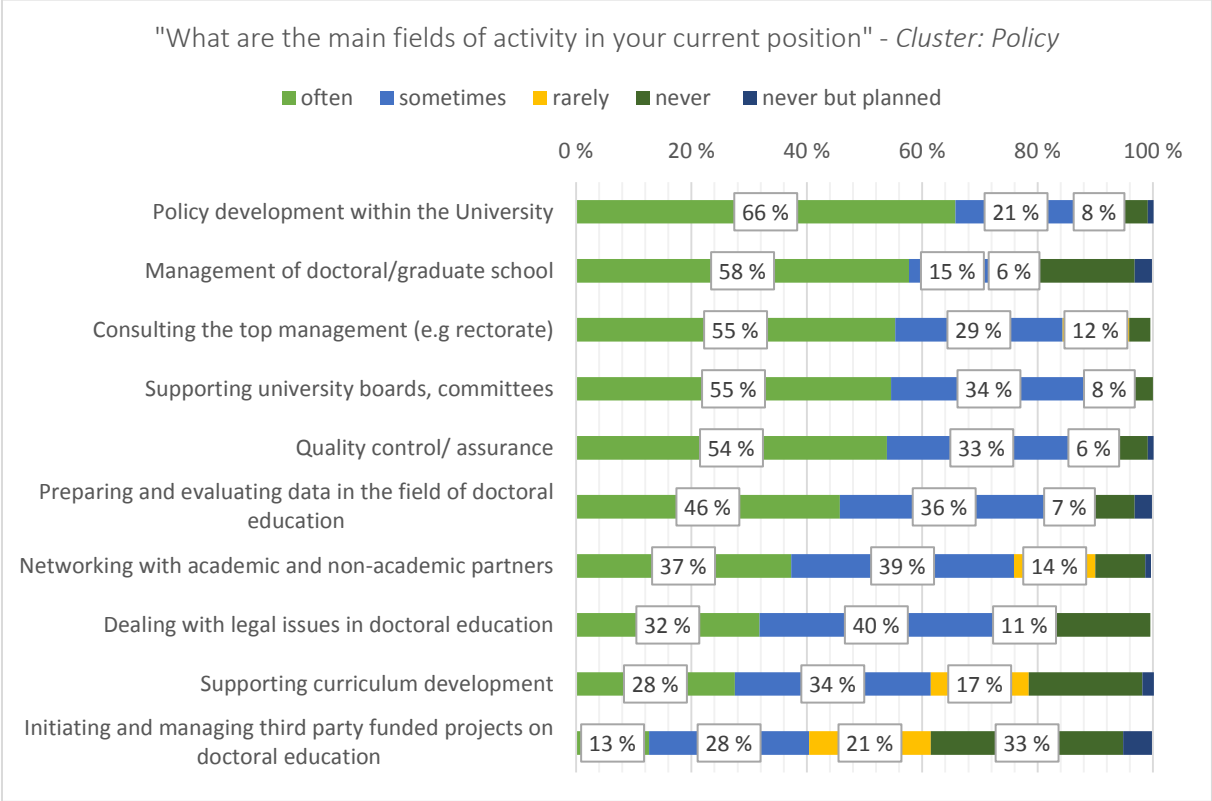
4.3.1.2 Policy - Support for Decision Makers

Figure 17: Fields of Activity – Cluster: Policy | n=183

Figure 17 illustrates that the area policy making is a field where a lot of activities take place. In as good as all mentioned activities at least 60% of respondents are involved often or sometimes; for 5 activities it is even over 80%. Only the last category - *Initiating and managing third party funded projects on doctoral education* - is conducted often or sometimes by less than 41% of participants. In this cluster we also have the activity which most respondents mention to be involved in of all activities in our survey, this being *Policy development within the University*.

This fits to our assumption that this kind of decision-support activity as well as further activities which go beyond pure administrative tasks are often found in the job profiles of Professionals in Doctoral Education.

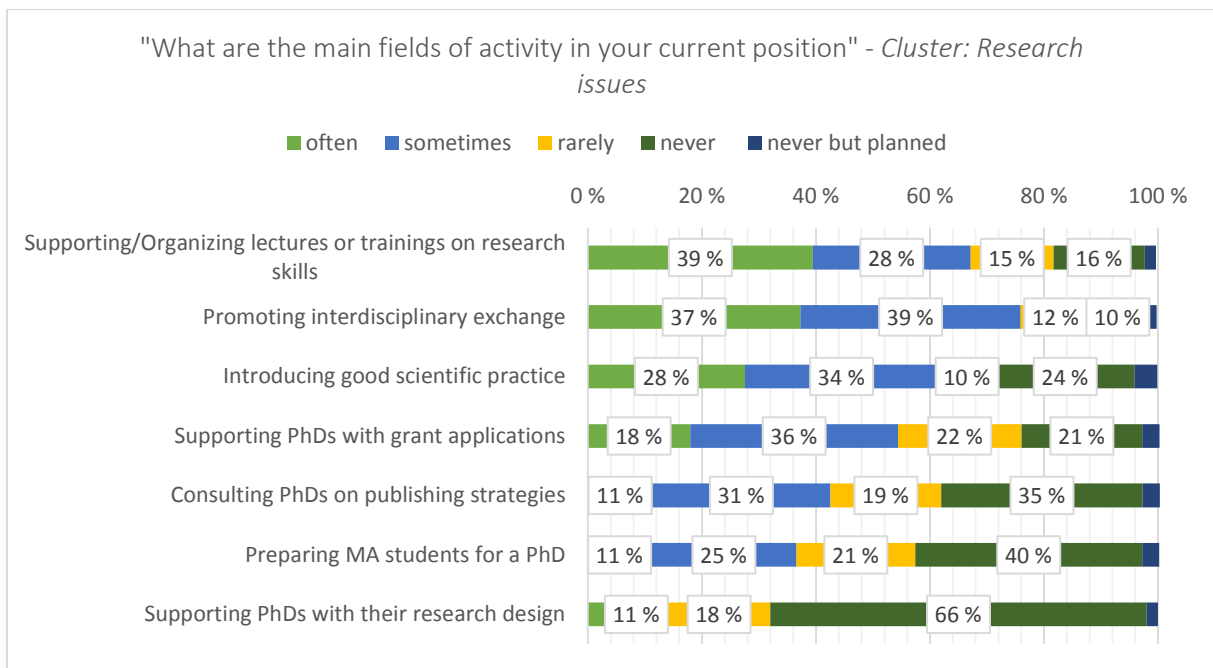*4.3.1.3 Support in Research Issues*

Figure 18: Fields of activity - Cluster: Research issues | n=183

In this cluster we have some variation, whilst some activities are done often or sometimes by over 60% of respondents (trainings, promotion of interdisciplinary exchange, introducing good practices), one area of activity, namely supporting PhDs with their research design is only done often/sometimes by less than 15%. This illustrates that whilst the support of research activity is of great importance to Professionals in Doctoral Education, the boarder to where content-related work starts is clear and is left to the supervisors. Preparing MA students for a PhD is also only partly in the focus of our respondents.
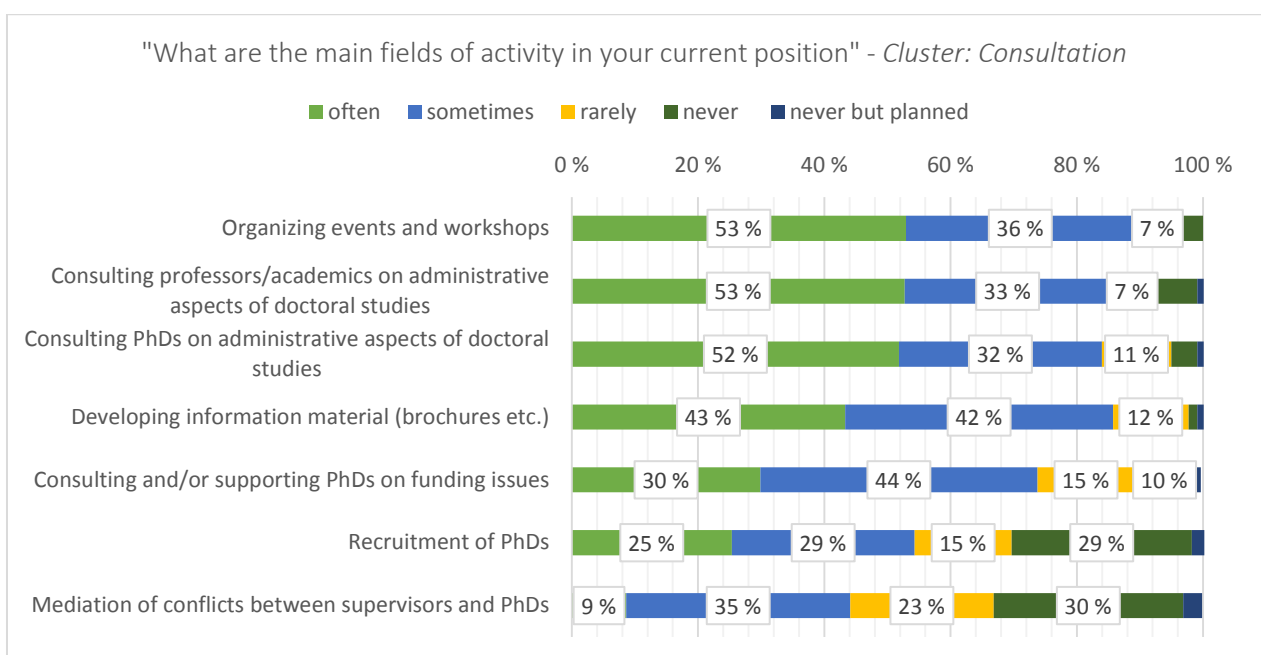
4.3.1.4 Consultation for PhDs, Supervisors

Figure 19: Fields of activity - Cluster: Consultation | n=183

In this cluster we can see that many respondents are in close contact with their PhD candidates and/or supervisors and consult them on different aspects, organise events for them etc. Figure 19 shows that over 80% of our respondents often or sometimes are involved in consultation, event organisation and developing information material. Recruitment and mediation are done by fewer respondents on a regular bases. We only have a bit over 40% of respondents stating that they are involved in these activities.

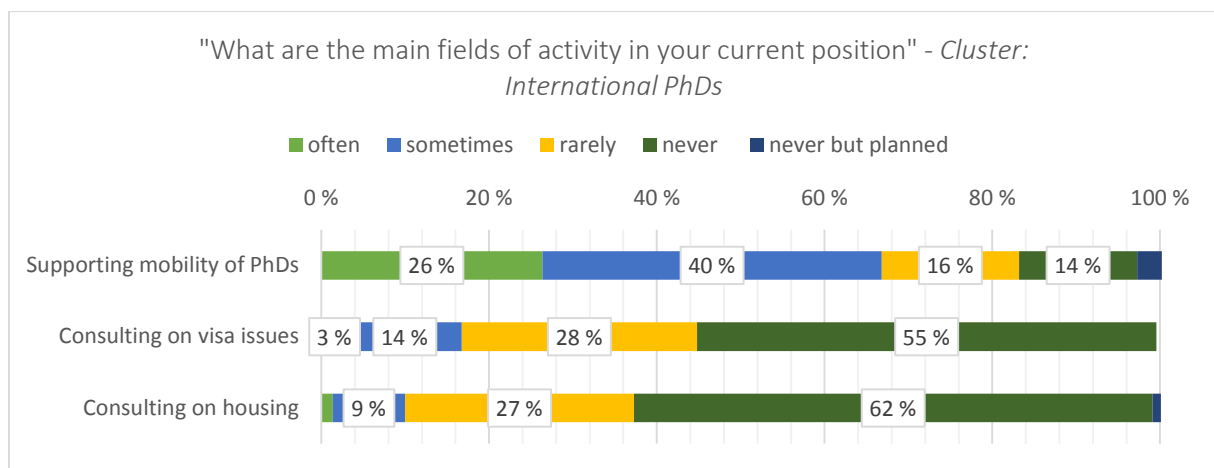### 4.3.1.5 Activities Mainly for International PhDs

Figure 20: Fields of activity - Cluster: International PhDs | n=183

In this cluster we can see that the support of mobility of PhD candidates is a task over 66% of our respondents perform often or sometimes. Other tasks such as consulting on visa issues or housing are done rarely or never by most. One reason for this could be that many universities have central international offices who take care of such issues for all incoming students including PhD candidates. Others leave this up to the PhD candidates themselves to take care of these issues.

When looking at the answers provided in the corresponding open text field we can find only very few answers which do not fit into the provided categories. They are just a closer specification of activities which we have listed. We therefore can assume the list of activities to be comprehensive.

4.3.2   How Independent are Professionals?

We asked the respondents if their job involved creating and developing new initiatives and projects and thereby having a level of independence in shaping their own activities. 78% answered this question with yes.

We therefore can assume that the majority has a certain level of independence. This supports one of our theories:

Professionals in Doctoral Education are often not only "administrative executors" but also consultants for top management and **have room to develop and realise own projects.**

4.3.3   Which Knowledge is Needed to Perform the Job?

In addition to the areas of activities we also wanted to know which type of knowledge the respondents believe to be of importance for their work.

When looking at the answers shown in figure 21 we can see that almost all respondents believe that it is vital for their everyday work to have a good knowledge of internal regulations regarding doctoral education (the characteristics partly relevant, hardly relevant and not relevant are not shown in this figure). Also the national framework as well as to a lesser extent the global trends are of relevance for our respondents. Whereas supervision, funding opportunities, research ethics and career opportunities are knowledge areas which are only relevant for some and less relevant for others. The other areas in general seem to be less relevant, with E-learning practices being on the bottom of the scale.
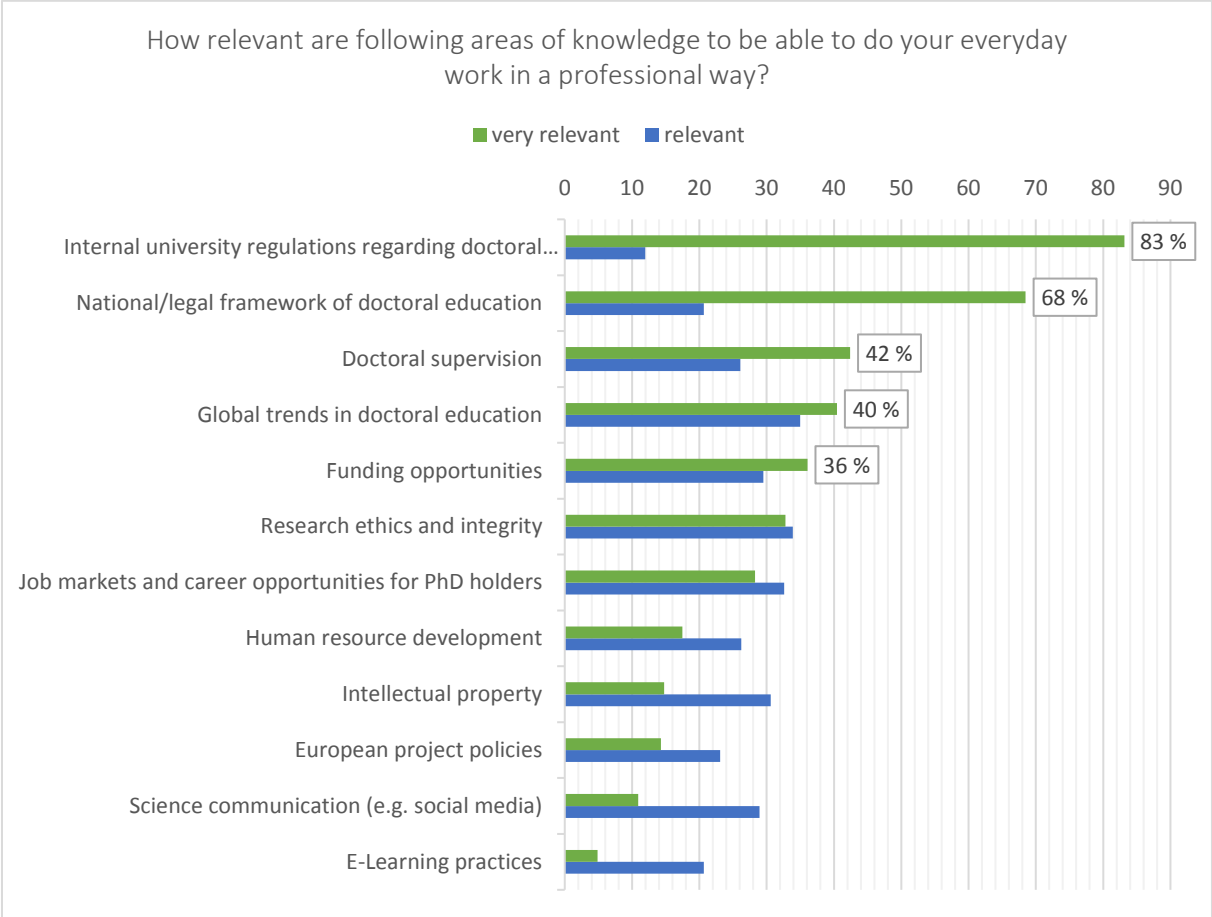

Figure 21: Areas of knowledge | n=184

4.3.4   What Skills are Needed?

To get an idea of a job profile of Professionals in Doctoral Education we need to know which skills are deemed important. The list of skills shown in figure 22 below was established with help of a list of skills used by another university doing research on job evaluation and analysis.[25] This list was slightly adapted to our needs and our own professional experience.

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[25] Wilfried Laurier University and wlusa (Wilfrid Laurier University Staff Association) – Pay Equity, Job Evaluation System, Job Analysis Questionnaire, 2001, Canada, http://legacy.wlu.ca/page.php?grp_id=13598&p=10598 (last retrieved 19.08.2016).
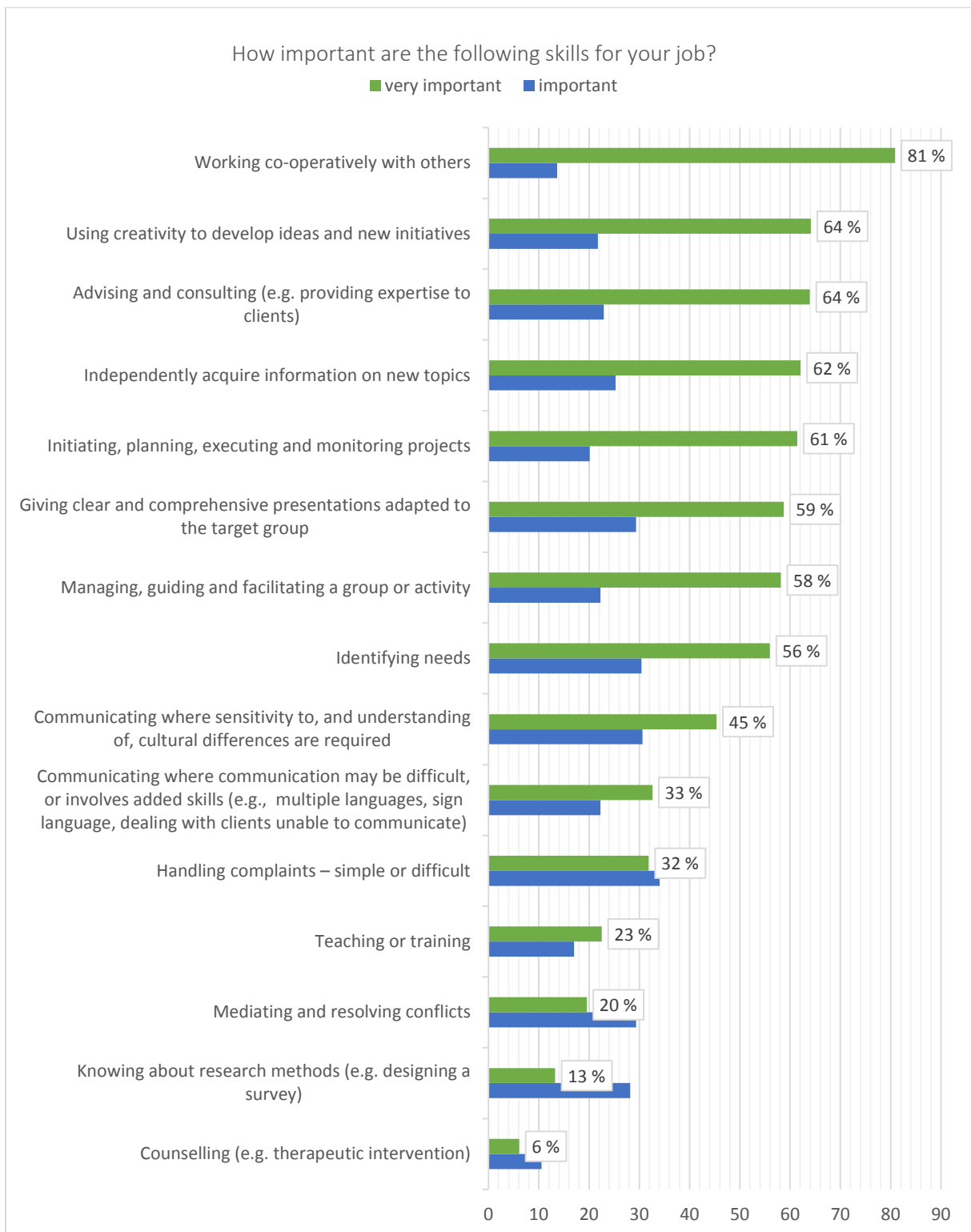
Figure 22: Skills | n=184

We sorted these skills as to which skill was deemed very important by most respondents (the characteristics partly important, hardly important and not important are not shown in this figure). We can see that almost all respondents agree on the importance of *cooperative working* - around 95% stated this skill to be (very) important.

Later in this report we will come back to this point, but it definitely is noteworthy here that over 85% of the respondents believe that *Using creativity to develop ideas and new initiatives* is of (high) importance.

If we sum up the skills deemed very important and important then we only find four skills which less than 50% found (very) important. These are: *teaching and training, mediating and resolving conflicts, knowing about research methods* and *counselling*. Counselling was deemed by over 60% as not (very) important. It seems as if few units work in this area, probably in many universities there are further units specialized in this area to whom can be referred in case of need.

4.4 Further Development of Professionals in Doctoral Education

After analysing the status quo of activities and knowledge and skills we now want to focus on further development and training of Professionals in Doctoral Education. Not only are we interested in finding out where the respondents see possible areas in which they need/want to develop into, we might get a glimpse as to which areas their units are developing into.

As mentioned in the introduction, one goal of the PRIDE project is also to develop a training course for Professionals in Doctoral Education.[26] We not only want to analyse this specific group but also support the professionalization of people working in the area of doctoral education in the future. As stated in the introduction we aim to establish, support and/or create a network of professionals to support an excellent, modern education system in all European Member States.

In general, so far there is no clear job profile as one can find in other areas in universities, e.g. for technology transfer officers. Burns Bachmann interviewed people working in the area of doctoral education and one interviewee stated:

> *"There's no one here to train you. You have to learn on the job." Even those who had some training expressed that "the systems have changed over the years, so that has all changed." They acknowledged that training was job specific so as things changed, they did most of their own training for the specific jobs required of them."* [27]

Especially the analysis of this chapter will serve as a basis for further decisions on how to proceed when establishing a training for people who work in the area of doctoral education. Additionally, we agree with Gornitzka and Larsen that an "increase in the requirements for formal educational qualification to hold administrative positions" [28] is a sign for professionalization.

4.4.1 Further Development? And if Yes, How?

In our survey, we asked the target group if they see the need or had the possibility to further develop themselves. Only 6% of the respondents agreed with the statement "I do not see any need to further inform myself or/and stay up-to-date". And 19% agreed with the statement "My job does not allow the time for such activities".

This allows the assumption that most respondents are committed to further develop themselves and that their positions allow them to do so.

In addition, we wanted to know how they acquire specific skills and knowledge related to the management of doctoral education. In figure 23 we can see that informal learning, exchanging with peers, reading relevant literature, and exchanging with academics are forms of developing skills and knowledge which are used by nearly 90% often or sometimes. However, these are all forms of training which are rather informal.

Certainly, formal trainings as well as the participation in projects and activities of international organization are very time consuming and we therefore did not expect very high activity here.

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[26] Professionals in Doctoral Education: Supporting skills development to better contribute to an European knowledge society/PRIDE - Lifelong Learning Programme Application Form – 2013 Call for proposals, version: 31.01.2013, p.19.

[27] Burns Bachmann, E., 2014. Doctoral Program Specialists in the Big Ten Conference, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

[28] Gornitzka, Å., Larsen, I.M., 2004. Towards professionalisation? Restructuring of administrative work force in universities. Higher Education 47, pp. 455–471, here p. 462.

Staff mobility programmes are only done by 3% often, by 27% sometimes and by 70% never. This could be because either there are not enough staff mobility programmes addressing the needs of people in the area of doctoral education, or because these programmes are too expensive and time consuming.
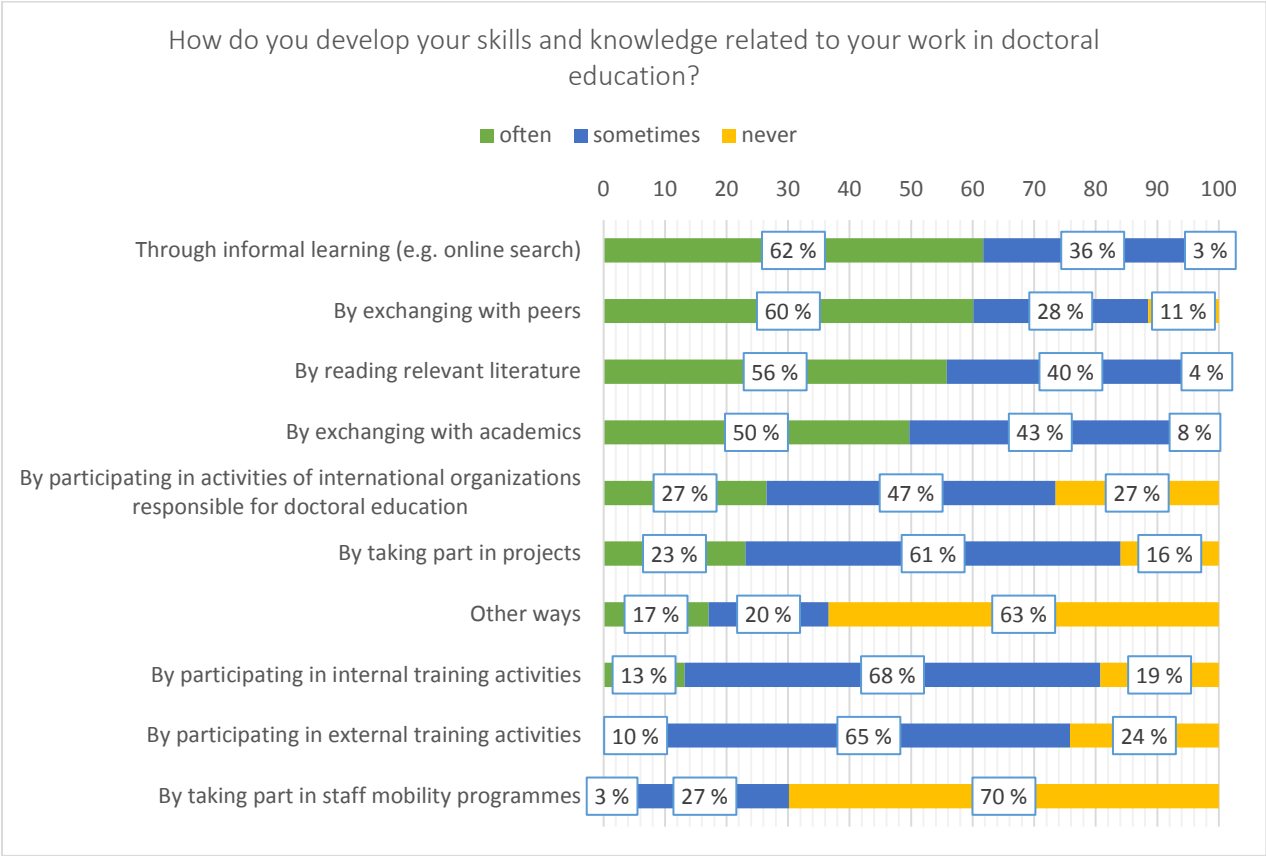

Figure 23: Skills development | n=184

4.4.2   Knowledge and Skills Development

In chapter 4.3.3 and 4.3.4 we asked about the knowledge and the skills they need for their everyday work. We used the same lists to ask them what they would like to know more about and which skills they would like to increase.

Figure 24 is sorted by the topics which most respondents want to know more about. *Global trends in doctoral education* is by far the topic most respondents are interested in learning more about.

Internal university regulations regarding doctoral education is on last place. If we think back, this was an area of knowledge 95% of respondents deemed (very) relevant for their everyday work. This shows well, that when looking at this scale we have to keep in mind that it does not represent how relevant certain areas are. Many respondents may already be very well informed about some areas as they have been on the job for a while. This needs to be kept in mind, when developing trainings – does the target group consist of new people to the area, or already well established people wanting to further develop themselves.
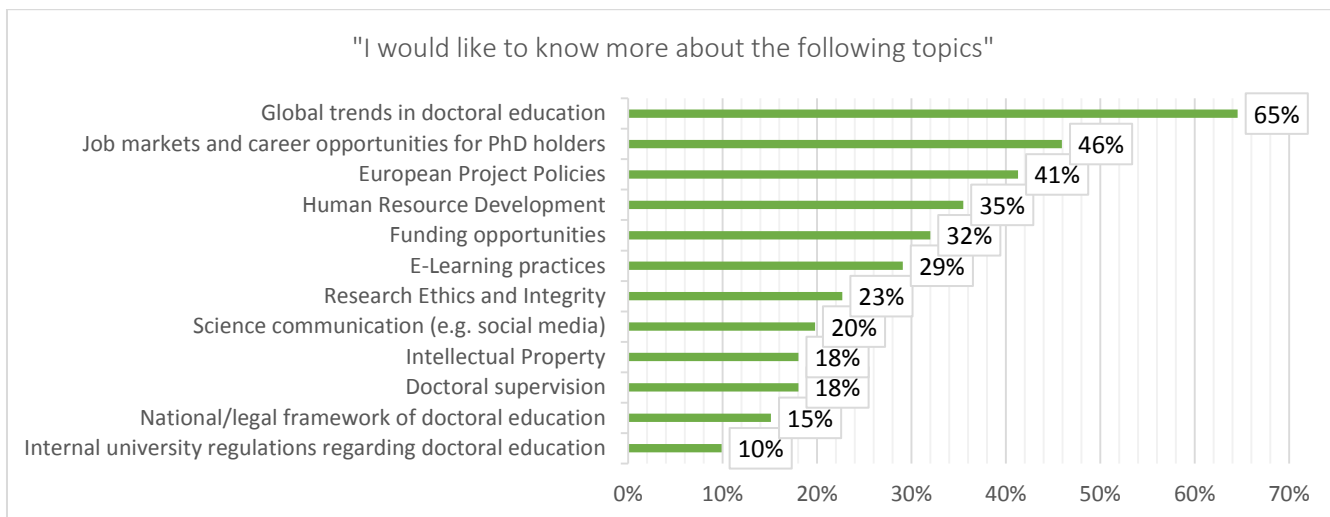
Figure 24: Know more about following topics

In addition to the data above, we also asked the respondents the following question: "Imagine you have the possibility to attend further training/education – which field would be interesting for you?" Hence, the respondents could mention skills and areas of topics that are not covered in the given answer categories. Here is a list of the fields indicated:

- Quality assurance, impact evaluation
- Leadership management, leadership skills
- Coaching, mediation, mentoring
- Financial management (on strategic level)
- Human resource development
- Public management, change management, strategic organisational development
- Lobbying (how to influence decision-makers outside and inside of the university)
- Immigration law
- Language training
- Learning from others by staff mobility programmes

We will now shift our attention to the skills the respondents would like to improve. In figure 25 we have listed these skills. When looking at the results it is noticeable that there is not a certain area that sticks out. 11 of the 15 skills would like to be improved by between 21-38% of the respondents, with 38% being the highest percentage. This is not very high, especially when comparing that in the last figure (figure 24) we get percentages of up to 65% for further development wishes.

In 4.3.4 we analysed the question: *How important are the following skills for your job?* for which we found skills which nearly 100% of respondents agreed on. Therefore we cannot deduct that skills are not deemed very important. One explanation could be that the respondents believe themselves already well equipped for their job and only partly see a need for further training in this area.
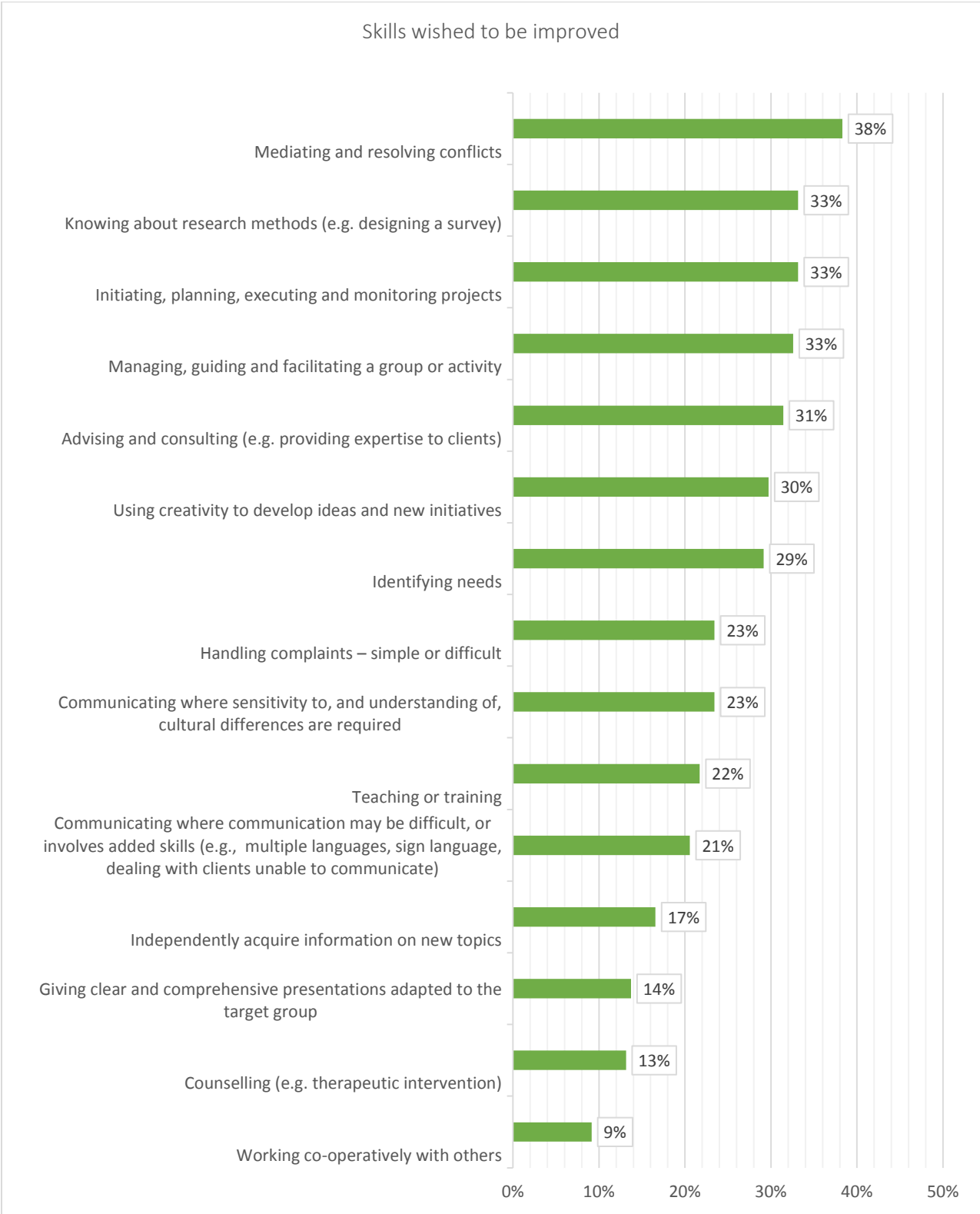
Skills wished to be improved

Skill	Percentage
Mediating and resolving conflicts	38%
Knowing about research methods (e.g. designing a survey)	33%
Initiating, planning, executing and monitoring projects	33%
Managing, guiding and facilitating a group or activity	33%
Advising and consulting (e.g. providing expertise to clients)	31%
Using creativity to develop ideas and new initiatives	30%
Identifying needs	29%
Handling complaints – simple or difficult	23%
Communicating where sensitivity to, and understanding of, cultural differences are required	23%
Teaching or training	22%
Communicating where communication may be difficult, or involves added skills (e.g., multiple languages, sign language, dealing with clients unable to communicate)	21%
Independently acquire information on new topics	17%
Giving clear and comprehensive presentations adapted to the target group	14%
Counselling (e.g. therapeutic intervention)	13%
Working co-operatively with others	9%

Figure 25: Skills wished to be improved

4.5   Professionals in Doctoral Education?!

As there so far is no job profile in Europe for Professionals in Doctoral Education we wanted to know if the respondents consider themselves as professionals. Indeed, 79% of all respondents would define themselves as a professional in doctoral education. In the following we like to elucidate in more detail some features of what could constitute a professional.

4.5.1   Characteristics of a Professional in Doctoral Education

Through our survey we could identify the following six components that constitute a professional in doctoral education according to the respondents of our survey.
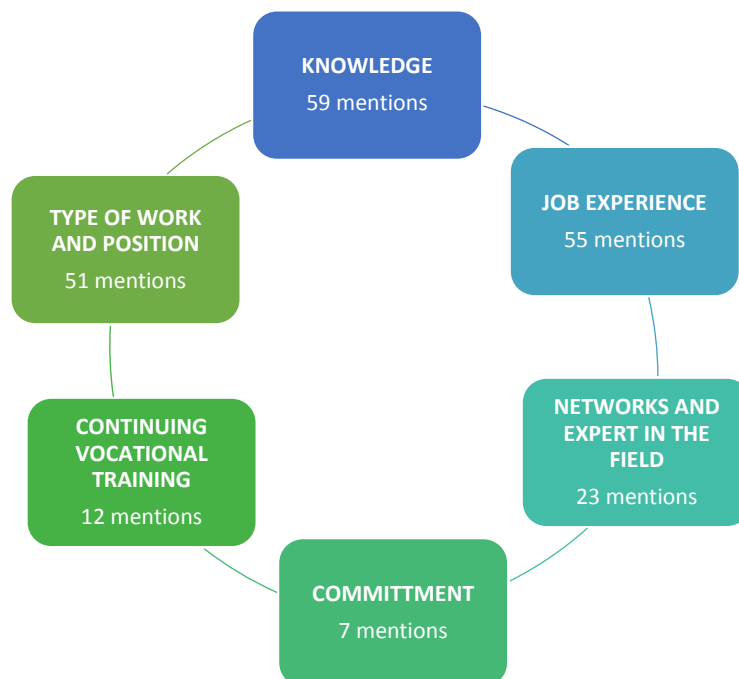

Figure 26: Characteristics of professionals

It is a combination of these six components that shape a professional when considering the answers of the respondents. In the majority of the statements, experience (55 mentions), knowledge (59 mentions) and type of work and position (51 mentions) define a professional.

4.5.1.1   *Job Experience (55 mentions)*

Besides subject knowledge, job experience in different positions in the field of Higher Educations is central for many respondents of our survey.

> *"I have been working with doctoral education for 19 years. My tasks have been everything from calls for PhD scholarships/fellowships, development of computer systems, development of guidelines and instructions as well as studies administration and issuing PhD diplomas."* *(Quotation from survey results, question 2.47)*

> *"A profound knowledge and experience in this field - but in different positions and areas - for about nine years."* *(Quotation from survey results, question 2.47)*

These experiences can be gained from different positions in different sectors, but most of the respondents mentioned job experiences in the Higher Educations area. There were only few respondents who also indicated having job experiences from the private sector as characteristic for a professional in doctoral education. The job experience in the Higher Education sector can be divided into experience in an administrative position and as a researcher. Many state that having a PhD themselves or having experience as a researcher make them better understand the needs of scientists and thus provide services and consultations on a higher quality. In addition, it is essential to gain profound knowledge about how the university functions as an organisation which usually is acquired through informal training and through job experience also in administrative positions.

> *"I hold a PhD myself and I have worked both as a researcher and as a university manager. Holding a PhD is crucial in this field: I have experienced writing a PhD on my own, which is very important for dealing with PhD students. Also, I aimed at pursuing an academic career and have thus acquired a lot of informal knowledge about the field and the necessities in following a career in this field. My experience as a university manager is also very important for this job because I know the roundabout of an organization like a university."* (Quotation from survey results, question 2.47)

4.5.1.2   Expert Knowledge (59 mentions)

From the answers of our respondents, it becomes evident that many believe that a certain level of expert knowledge makes them a professional in doctoral education. Basically, it is knowledge about internal university regulations, rules and processes and about global trends and recommendations in doctoral education. Furthermore, it concerns also having notions about the political frameworks and understanding the "big picture" of doctoral education on different levels and from different perspectives. Having an overview about developments in doctoral education in other European countries is mentioned as well.

> *"A holistic understanding of the different aspects that affect and have bearing and relevance on doctoral education, involvement in both recruitment and pastoral sides. Clued into wider national and international developments concerning doctoral provision."* (Quotation from survey results, question 2.47)

Understanding the needs of different stakeholders especially of PhD candidates and researchers and being familiar with the academic discourse about doctoral education is part of this knowledge as well.

4.5.1.3   Type of Work and Position (51 mentions)

Another important component that characterizes a professional is the **"type of work and position"**. Taken together, the responses suggest that this type of work demands conceptual, creative and strategic planning and thinking. Describing the area as a dynamic and young working field, the respondents suggest that professionals should be able to identify relevant trends and translate these issues and trends, if relevant, into strategic and operational initiatives. Furthermore, the answers convey that professionals require a high ability to communicate and cooperate with different stakeholders (e.g. consulting, training and mentoring of researchers).

> *"Formulating strategies and policies, restructuring the office to align with the university´s new strategic vision"* (Quotation from survey results, question 2.47)
> *"Contribution to national agenda on both issues in doctoral education and professional development of administrative staff in the area. Ability to be able to translate issues and trends into strategic and operational initiatives within institution."* (Quotation from survey results, question 2.47)

4.5.1.4   Networks (23 mentions)

"Being recognized as an expert in doctoral education and being integrated in a network of other professionals" is a further component we can identify within the responses. Many respondents describe that they are invited to national and international conferences or nominated as experts in different committees and that this expresses their status as a professional in doctoral education. Another aspect that is mentioned as important to qualify as a professional is the participation in a network of other professionals working in Higher Education. These networks can be university-internal, on a national as well as an international level.

> *"I work directly for the Dean of Graduate Studies. My role is specifically to enhance the student experience in the university for doctoral candidates. I keep abreast of international best practice and try and implement it in this university. I contribute to international conferences on doctoral education. I contribute to national and international working groups concerned with doctoral education. I work with academic members of staff on all aspects of the administration of PhD students in the university." (Quotation from survey results, question 2.47)*

4.5.1.5   Commitment and Continuing Training (7 mentions)

According to the respondents **"commitment"** and **"continuing vocational training"** are further ingredients for defining themselves as professionals. However, these two topics were not mentioned as frequently as the other four topics described above. Commitment is described as a commitment to a high quality performance and in general to the issue "doctoral education". It also comprises a high motivation to change and bring forward topics and concerns in this area and having a personal interest in the developments of doctoral education.

> *"I'm committed to the highest standards of integrity and professionalism in the relationship with our clients. I'm trying to provide high quality information and services." (Quotation from survey results, question 2.47)*

4.5.2   Reasons for not Defining Oneself as a Professional in Doctoral Education

Though the question "Would you define yourself as a professional in doctoral education" was answered by the large majority (82%) with "Yes", still 18% said "No". In the following open text field 36 persons explained why they don't define themselves as professional in doctoral education. Again here, job experience plays a central role. The majority of the respondents declare that they do not yet have enough job experience and thus not enough knowledge in the field of doctoral education. Furthermore, some respondents suggest that they only know about one specific area that is relevant to doctoral education, but not all relevant fields. Few persons also mention the lack of formal training and of networking. Other reasons for not defining themselves as a professional are the following: field of activities is only of administrative nature, doctoral education is only a small part of the daily work, expert just internal within the university but not national or international level.

Some comments suggest that the term "professional in doctoral education" is not a suitable definition:

> *"I do dedicate a big part of my time to the organization of professional development activities for doctoral researchers in my scientific field. And I do so as a manager, not as a professor or senior researcher. However, the definition of a "professional in doctoral education" seems too limiting to me. I would rather consider myself a "professional in higher education", including doctoral education."*

> *"I would specify myself as a professional in the higher education. Many topics/things I have to deal with are equivalent to previous jobs in the executive education sector (MBA) therefore I*

believe that it is much more important that you are able to adapt your knowledge and abilities of your previous professional experiences."

There are also respondents who are of the opinion that only researchers who are involved in the supervision of PhDs and/or conduct research should be called "Professionals in Doctoral Education". One person sees the professionals just on the level of vice-rectors, as they are the decision-makers.

4.5.3   Specific Activities of Professionals

One of our assumptions is that Professionals in Doctoral Education also are involved in activities which are not purely administrative but also put them in strategic positions, shaping the universities in the area of doctoral education. This can be seen as an indicator for a highly professional group of people as they need to be experts to be able to involve in such activities.

For this reason we asked: "What are the main fields of activity in your current position?" -

- "Policy Development within the University" and
- "Consulting the top management".

When looking at all the answers of all respondents we receive following results:
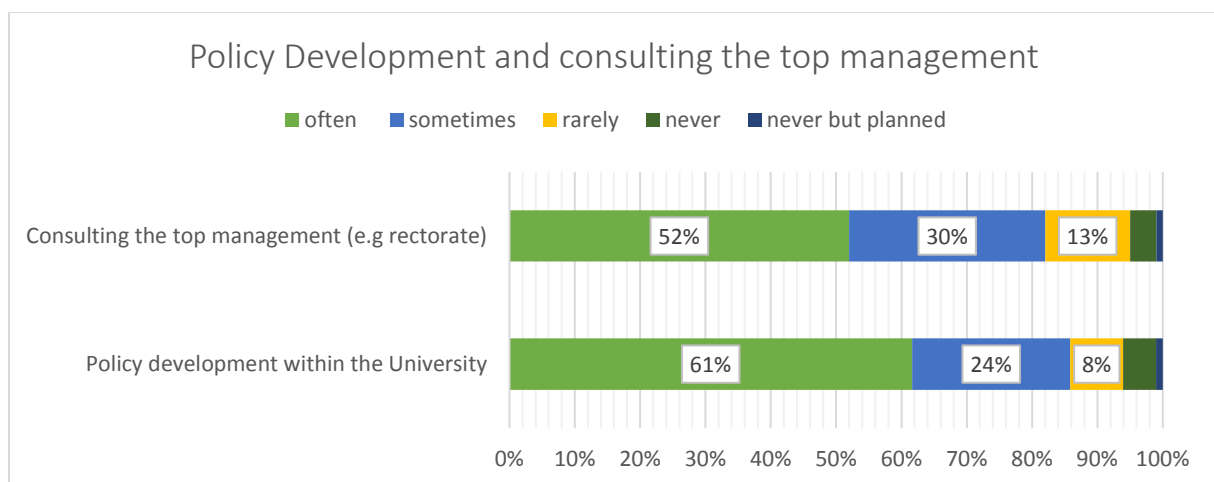

Figure 27: Policy Development and consulting the top management | n=182/180

In figure 27 we can see that around 85% of the respondents often or sometimes engage in policy development within the university whilst only 5% never engage in this area. As for consulting the top management 82% state that this often/sometimes is a main field of activity with only 4% never doing this.

4.5.4   Networking and Interaction with Others

In this section we concentrate only on those respondents who defined themselves as Professionals in Doctoral Education and are not excluded by the question at the beginning defining themselves as being mainly a researcher. This group includes 141 respondents.

As described in chapter 1, the definition of a professional includes the point "the growth and formalisation of networks"[29]. Networking and interacting with other Professionals in Doctoral Education therefore can be seen as indicator for professionalization in the area. In the survey we asked how the respondents interact with other professionals in the field of doctoral education (nationally and internationally) and how often.
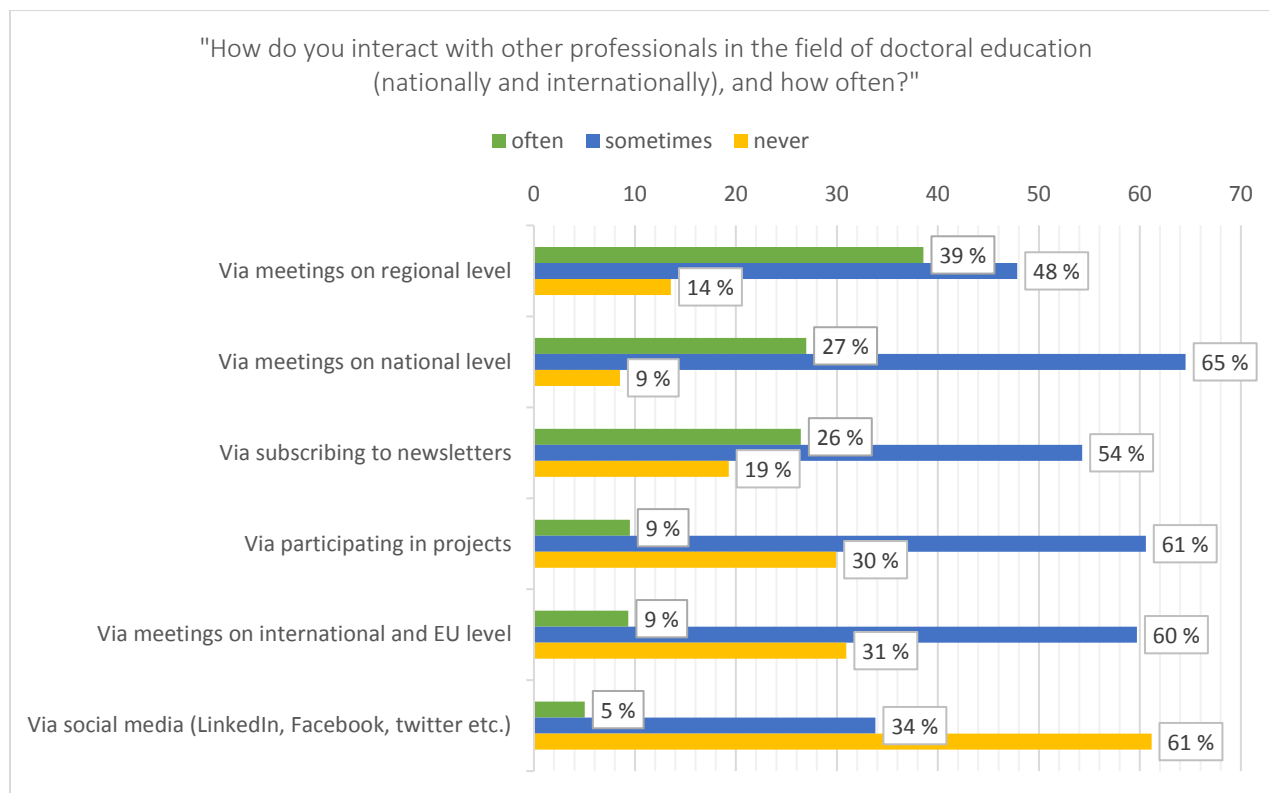

Figure 28: Interaction with other professionals | n=141 (only respondents who defined themselves as professionals)

Whilst nearly all respondents participate in meetings on a national level (only 9% never do this), interaction via social media is not very popular – over 61% never do this. Around 60% sometimes and around 10% often participate in international and EU meetings. This shows that many professionals are looking beyond the border of their own country and have an international network of peers.

But of course networking and exchange takes place not only with people from the same area - external networks such as contacts to funding agencies or ministries etc. are of value too.[30] Therefore we also asked about interactions with external, non-university stakeholders.

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[29] Gornitzka, Å., Larsen, I.M., 2004. Towards professionalisation? Restructuring of administrative work force in universities. Higher Education 47, pp. 455–471, here p. 463.

[30] See also Whitchurch, C., 2008. Research and Development Series. Professional managers in UK higher education: preparing for complex futures, final report. Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, London, p. 15.
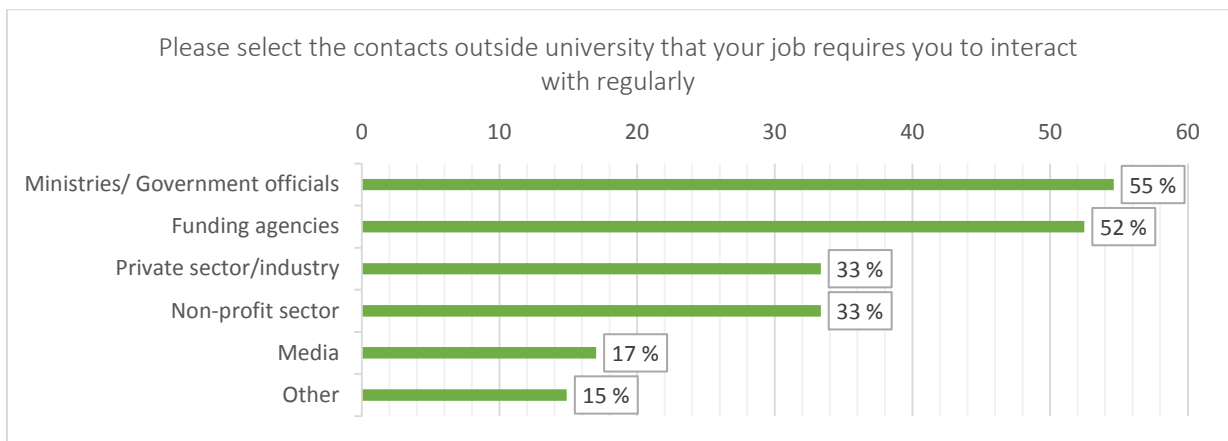
Figure 29: Contacts outside university | n=141 (only respondents who defined themselves as professionals)

55% state that and interaction with ministries/government officials is required regularly in their job. Funding agencies are also mentioned by over 50% of respondents. Only around 16% do not state any regular contact outside the university with whom they interact regularly.

4.5.5   Development of New Initiatives

A further assumption concerning Professionals in Doctoral Education is that "this specialised personnel in doctoral education is highly qualified and has, apart from typical routine tasks, **the possibility to develop own ideas and initiatives**." Therefore we asked our target group to what extend their job/position allows to create and develop new initiatives or projects.
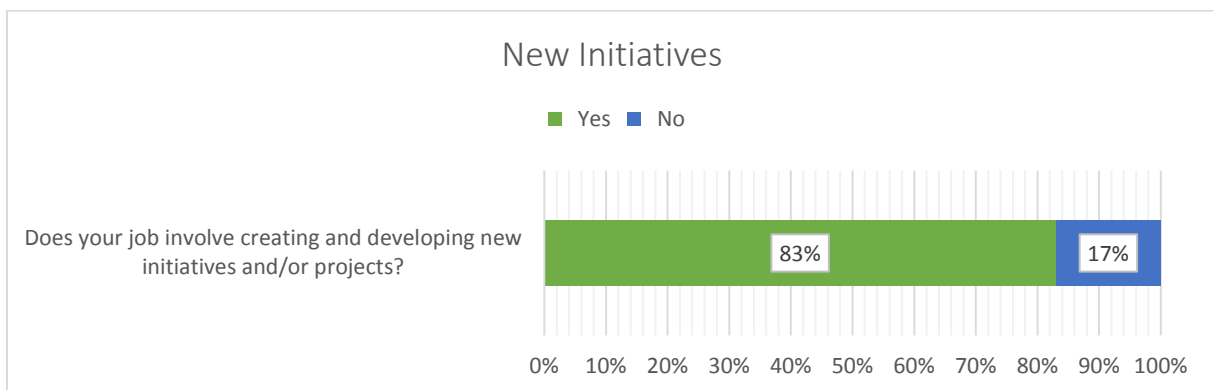

Figure 30: New initiatives | n=137 (only respondents who defined themselves as professionals)

Figure 30 shows that the jobs of around 83 % respondents involves creating and developing new ideas, which strengthens our assumption. To further strengthen this theory we would like to refer to a question we addressed earlier concerning skills needed to perform this type of job (chapter 4.3.4). There we could see that "using creativity to develop ideas and new initiatives" was seen as very important by 86% of our respondents.

4.5.5.1   Examples of Initiatives and Projects Developed by Respondents

In an open text field we asked the participants of the survey to give some examples of initiatives they are currently developing or had been involved in. A broad variety of initiatives and projects were mentioned, mostly services for different relevant target groups.

Target specific initiatives and services within the institution

Many initiatives mentioned by the respondents are new services and support structures for **PhD candidates (and postdocs)**. Career possibilities within and outside academia, career development and further development of trainings in transferable skills seem to be one topic. The respondents describe

the following initiatives: organising career days or career talks, career coaching, creating internship frameworks with companies from the private sector, trainings in the field of good scientific practice and research integrity, spring/summer schools on different relevant topics, etc. Another field of activity is building up special support structures for international PhD candidates, including short term PhDs (e.g. a special programme for visiting researchers). Further initiatives the respondents indicated are organizing different forms of mentoring programmes, creating internal networking activities and events, supporting international mobility, developing online tools and trainings for PhDs (e.g. for progression monitoring, for evaluation of individual study plans, for developing competences such as teaching competences), building up internal funding opportunities (e.g. mobility funding), setting up a mental health task force for PhDs, developing an online MPhil/PhD, strengthen entrepreneurship, etc.

Supervisors are another target group our respondents support with initiatives and projects. Supervision trainings or "supervisor's development programme" were mentioned as well as e-supervision. Some respondents developed initiatives for **Alumni** for instance building up an alumni network. One person is setting up training courses for **PhD programme coordinators** (e.g. in conflict management), who can also be seen as one possible target group.

Initiatives on the managerial level

Other initiatives and projects indicated by the respondents relate to the field of **policy and strategy development**: monitoring and revision of administrative procedures, developing a strategy for internationalization of doctoral education (joint degrees or inter-university networks), creating inter- and multidisciplinary programmes, initiating projects and policies in the area of technology transfer and technology exploitation, developing a fundraising and marketing/communication concept, setting up a recruitment strategy, etc.

Quality and evaluation management is another field where new projects and initiatives are developed. This includes projects on analysing completion and dropout rates in PhD education and in general establishing new quality assurance mechanisms on different levels.

Initiatives in the field of science communication

A further field of activities is in the area of science communication. Here the main goal of the initiatives described by our respondents is to strengthen the visibility of junior researchers, also outside academia.

Finally, to illustrate the variety of initiatives respondents have developed, you can find below some quotations from respondents on the question "Would you like to give one or two examples of initiatives or projects which you have developed and/or you are currently developing?"

> *"A series of major revisions in administrative procedures. Introducing a far more user-oriented and digitalized approach to administrative support of PhD education. Evaluation and scientific documentation of the effects of research education." (Quotation from survey results, question 2.37)*

> *"1. Developing initiatives on career development for PhD researchers (e.g. lunchbox sessions about a certain topic, e.g. scientific integrity, publication pressure, transferable skills training, etc.). 2. Setting up an alumni-network. 3. Organising activities to involve industry in PhD education (e.g. campus café with opportunities for PhD researchers and people from industry to interact)." (Quotation from survey results, question 2.37)*

"I developed a research monitor, to register and monitor the many different aspects of research, and to combine information to be able to advice on policy changes." (Quotation from survey results, question 2.37)

"1.New doctoral program. 2. Learning plans/supported learning program for doctoral students. 3. Industry linkages to student research projects. Research photography (as a means of communicating research to people not in your field)." (Quotation from survey results, question 2.37)

5 Conclusion

With this report we want to contribute to the discussion of a relatively new and fast developing professional field, the so-called Higher Education Professionals. So far professionals working in doctoral education were not included in previous studies on Higher Education Professionals. With help of this report we want to provide a first overview over this young professional field and thus set a basis for further discussion.

By using a survey we addressed people working in this field to learn more about them, their backgrounds, their jobs, and what activities they include and how Professionals in Doctoral Education strive to further develop themselves. We also tried to identify if they believe to be professionals and how they define this professionalism.

When looking at the data the following points can be noticed:

- The great majority, 79% of our respondents define themselves as Professionals in Doctoral Education. This was unexpected for us as the professional field is quite young and we assumed the self-perception as "professional in doctoral education" to be underdeveloped. For the project, this result is definitely pleasing because the goal of establishing a network of Professionals in Doctoral Education can already "grow" from a common understanding.
- What we also could see is that researchers are often involved in the initial establishment of doctoral schools or units dealing with doctoral education whilst in the more established units we find far more people who are not primarily researchers. It can be assumed that many researchers who engage in the initial establishment of a doctoral school move back to their core activities in research.
- Further professional development is a topic which most respondents commit to. Only few respondents do not see the need or do not have the time for trainings, the vast majority seems open and eager for further development in the area of doctoral education.

In addition, our assumption that Professionals in Doctoral Education are often not only "administrative executors" but also consultants for top management who have room to develop and realise own projects was confirmed by our study. This specialised personnel in doctoral education is highly qualified and has, apart from typical routine tasks, the possibility to develop own ideas and initiatives. This assumption was strengthened by having a closer look at the fields of activities and type of work the respondents undertake in their daily work. In a further analysis we will need to differentiate how work is distributed in units in which more than one person is dealing with doctoral education.

The next step after this analysis was to look at the same topic from another perspective. For this a qualitative method was used: Focus groups were interviewed to be able to go into more detail and ask precise questions on areas we believed needed more light shed on. At the same time we decided to gather information not only from Professionals in Doctoral Education but from people close to them. Therefore, also vice-rectors, academic heads of schools, members from interest groups as well as from people from the HR area were interview. The report on the focus groups is published separately and can be found on the PRIDE website. In addition, a handbook will be published in which we bring together all acquired information in a comprehensive way.

This report provides a first overview over the acquired data. But of course there are many areas in which further research will be necessary. Also, this being a developing field, the situation of Professionals in Doctoral Education is a fast changing occupational field. We will carry on working to make sure that the worth and necessity of this profession is recognized and at the same time support

people in this field to become professionals and be able to develop themselves in a most beneficial way.

6   Table of Figures

7 Annex – The PRIDE Questionnaire

Dear Mr/ Ms XY,

on behalf of the EU-funded **PRIDE (Professionals in Doctoral Education)** project, I would like to ask for your assistance by completing a short survey. We were recommended to contact you because you are an **expert in doctoral education at your institution.**

The **PRIDE** project aims to develop tools and training methods to **support non-academic staff working in doctoral education.** We would like to better understand your tasks and fields of activities, as well as your specific skills and training needs.

The survey will only take **15 minutes of your time** and any data that you provide will be treated confidentially. The outcomes of the survey will be available on the PRIDE website.

Thank you for your participation and support, it is greatly appreciated!

Lucas Zinner on behalf of the PRIDE project consortium

PRIDE   Project   Coordinator
Research Services and Career Development | Center for Doctoral Studies, University of Vienna
E: lucas.zinner@univie.ac.at
http://www.pride-project.eu
PRIDE LinkedIn group

Professionals in Doctoral Education

1 – Background data

1.1 In which organizational unit are you currently working? (You can tick more than one option)

- *Graduate/Doctoral school*
- *Research service unit*
- *Career center*
- *International office*
- *Rector´s office*
- *Faculty office*
- *Umbrella organization*
- *Educational/teaching affairs office*
- *Other*

1.2. If "other", please specify: _____

1.3 For how long has the unit you are working in existed (If you work in more than one unit, please always refer to the position which is more related to doctoral education)? (*Categories: 1-3 years, 4-6 years, 7 years and more*)

1.4 Is there a job title for your position? *(Yes/No)*

1.5 If yes, please indicate your job title:_____

1.6 Do you have a permanent contract at your institution? *(Yes/No)*

1.7 How long have you been working in your current position (in the area of doctoral education)? (*Categories: 1-3 years, 4-6 years, 7 years and more*)

1.8 What percentage of your overall working time do you spend dealing with tasks in the field of doctoral education? *(Percentage scale)*

1.9 Please indicate the sector of your last job:

- *Academia/ Higher Education sector*
- *Other public sector*
- *Non-profit sector*
- *Private sector*
- *Other*
- *My current position is my first job after finishing my education*

1.10 Please indicate the type of job your previous position was (you can tick more than one option)

- *Researcher (including PhD)*
- *Administrator/ Manager*
- *Teacher/Trainer*
- *Not applicable (if first job after education)*
- *Other (please specify)* _____

1.11 How many years did you work in your previous position? (*Categories: 1-3 years, 4-6 years, 7 years and more*)

1.12 How relevant were your previous job experiences for your current position? (*Scale: very relevant – partly relevant - not relevant*)

1.13 Think about your future career: Do you wish to stay in the higher education area in a non-academic position? *(Yes/no/no comment)*

1.14 *(only for persons who answered no in 1.13)* For what reason/s are you planning to leave your current position (non-academic) in higher education? *(Open text field)*

1.15 *(only for persons who answered yes in 1.13)* What are your reasons for wanting to stay in the higher education area in a non-academic position? *(Open text field)*

2 - Fields of activities, roles and responsibilities

2.1 What are the main fields of activity in your current position? *(Categories: often, sometimes, rarely, never, never but planned)*

- Recruitment of PhDs
- Consulting and/or supporting PhDs on funding issues
- Consulting PhDs on administrative aspects of doctoral studies
- Consulting professors/academics on administrative aspects of doctoral studies
- Consulting on visa issues
- Consulting on housing
- Mediation of conflicts between supervisors and PhDs

- Preparing MA students for a PhD
- Consulting PhDs on publishing strategies
- Supporting PhDs with grant applications
- Supporting PhDs with their research design
- Supporting/organizing lectures or trainings on research skills
- Supporting/organizing lectures or trainings on transferable skills
- Research supervision of PhDs
- Looking for (research) partners from non-academic sectors
- Introducing good scientific practice
- Promoting interdisciplinary exchange

- Policy development within the university
- Developing information material (brochures etc.)
- Organizing events and workshops
- Consulting the top management (e.g rectorate)
- Dealing with legal issues in doctoral education
- Supporting university boards, committees
- Management of doctoral/graduate school
- Quality control/ assurance
- Initiating and managing third party funded projects on doctoral education
- Preparing and evaluating data in the field of doctoral education
- Supporting curriculum development

- Consulting PhDs on career topics
- Establishing relations with potential employers

- Networking with academic and non-academic partners
- Supporting mobility of PhDs

- Others

2.34 If "Other", please specify: _____

2.35 Please select the contacts outside university that your job requires you to interact with regularly:

- *Ministries/ Government officials*
- *Funding agencies*
- *Private sector/industry*
- *Media*
- *Non-profit sector*
- *Other (please specify)_____*

2.36 Does your job involve creating and developing new initiatives and/or projects? (*categories yes, no*)

2.37 *(only people who ticked yes in 2.3)*: Optional: Would you like to give one or two examples of initiatives or projects which you have developed and/or you are currently developing? *(Free text field)*

2.38 How do you interact with other professionals in the field of doctoral education (nationally and internationally), and how often? (*Categories often/sometimes/never*)

- *Via meetings on regional level*
- *Via meetings on national level*
- *Via meetings on international and EU level*
- *Via participating in projects*
- *Via social media (LinkedIn, Facebook, twitter etc.)*
- *Via subscribing to newsletters*
- *Other ways*

2.45 If you ticked "Other ways", please specify:_____

2.46 Would you define yourself as a professional in doctoral education? (*Yes, no*)

2.47 *(only for persons who answered yes in 2.6)*: What characterizes you as a professional in doctoral education, in your opinion? *(Open text field)*

2.48 *(only for persons who answered no in 2.6)*: Why would you not define yourself as a professional in doctoral education? *(Open text field)*

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3 – Skills and areas of knowledge

3.1 Please find below a list of skills:

How important are the following skills for your job (column A)? *(scale: very important to not important)*?

- *Advising and consulting (e.g. providing expertise to clients)*
- *Communicating where communication may be difficult, or involves added skills (e.g., multiple languages, sign language, dealing with clients unable to communicate)*
- *Communicating where sensitivity to, and understanding of, cultural differences are required*

- *Counselling (e.g. therapeutic intervention)*
- *Handling complaints – simple or difficult*
- *Identifying needs*
- *Giving clear and comprehensive presentations adapted to the target group*
- *Mediating and resolving conflicts*
- *Teaching or training*
- *Working co-operatively with others*
- *Using creativity to develop ideas and new initiatives*
- *Managing, guiding and facilitating a group or activity*
- *Initiating, planning, executing and monitoring projects*
- *Independently acquire information on new topics*
- *Knowing about research methods (e.g. designing a survey)*

3.16 Please select from the list below a maximum of 5 skills which you would like to improve *(see list of skills from questions 3.1):*

3.17 How relevant are the following areas of knowledge to be able to do your everyday work in a professional way? *(5 scales: very relevant - not relevant)*

- *Internal university regulations regarding doctoral education*
- *National/legal framework of doctoral education*
- *Global trends in doctoral education*
- *Job markets and career opportunities for PhD holders*
- *Doctoral supervision*
- *Science communication (e.g. social media)*
- *Funding opportunities*
- *Research Ethics and Integrity*
- *Intellectual Property*
- *E-Learning practices*
- *European Project Policies*
- *Human Resource Development*

3.29 I would like to know more on the following topics: (list from questions 3.17)

3.30 How do you develop your skills and knowledge related to your work in doctoral education (*Categories often/sometimes/never)*?

- *By reading relevant literature*
- *By participating in activities of international organizations responsible for doctoral education*
- *By taking part in staff mobility programmes*
- *By participating in internal training activities*
- *By participating in external training activities*
- *By taking part in projects*
- *By exchanging with peers*
- *By exchanging with academics*

- *Through informal learning (e.g. online search)*
- *Other ways*

3.41 I do not see any need to further inform myself or/and stay up-to-date (agree/ not agree)

3.42 My job does not allow the time for such activities (agree/ not agree)

3.43 Imagine you have the possibility to attend further training/education – which field would be interesting for you? (Open text field)

4 – Statistical information

4.1 What is your gender? (*Female, Male, Other*)

4.2 What is your age? *(Categories: younger than 20, 20-25, 26-30, 31-35, 36-40, 41-45,…, older than 60)*

4.3 What is the highest level of education you have completed? (*Secondary school, Bachelor, Master, PhD*)

4.4 If you have completed a Bachelor/Master/PhD: What was your field of study? *(Education, Humanities and Arts, Social Sciences, Natural and Life Sciences, Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction, Human Medicine, Agriculture and Vet. Medicine, Business and Economics)*

4.5 In which country is your work place located? (*Drop-down menu with list of countries*)

After the completion of the survey, the participants were directed to the PRIDE website, answering the following questions:

I Do you know colleagues who work as non-academic staff in the field of doctoral education and who you could recommend to us to complete this survey? *(Yes, no)*

II If yes, please give us contact details of these colleagues: *name, university, e-mail address (if available)*

III Are you interested in joining the LinkedIn group "Professionals in Doctoral Education"? (*Yes, No*)

IV *(only for persons who answered yes in 5.3)* Please give us your contact details and we will invite you to the LinkedIn group "Professionals in Doctoral Education": *name, university, e-mail address*

V If you would like to be informed personally about the outcomes of our survey and/or be available for a personal interview please fill in your contact details: *name, university, e-mail address*