

Prof. Aldo Schiavone

**Introduction of the Meeting of the
Council of Scholars
European Doctoral Programme
24 February 2010, SUM, Palazzo Strozzi, Florence**

Today's meeting marks the first step on a long road we hope to travel down together. As you all know, for some years now the EHES, the EPHE and the SUM have been working on the project to establish a European doctoral school for the human and social sciences. Humboldt Universität and the CEU joined this group at a later stage.

We are all convinced that the field of advanced studies, and in particular that of the doctoral schools, is of crucial importance for the future of the European university system. The challenge facing us is the formation of our future governing and management elites: this is the first task of a university system, and it is a challenge that can only be met by working together. And we are convinced that greater and more regular cooperation between the main educational institutions active in this field is an indispensable precondition for any further development. Integration is our only hope. This is the spirit with which we have embarked upon our project.

We are also convinced that the European Community has not done enough in this area, and needs to be urged more forcefully to make a greater commitment. Just a short distance from Palazzo Strozzi, in Fiesole, there is of course the Istituto Universitario Europeo, which has done a magnificent job ever since it was set up. But it is a solitary institute, and in any case we are not here to replicate that experience. We are here to try to build something different – compatible with and complementary to the IEU, but different.

In fact, our project is not based on the construction of a new centre, in Paris, Berlin, Florence or Budapest, but on the development of a network structure capable of valorizing the resources and specificities of each of our institutions in the best possible way, and offering our students genuine research experience encompassing different traditions of study. We are convinced that this model – the network model, which connects and at the same time values differences – represents the future of European university integration in the sector of advanced studies. It is a choice without precedent in Europe, and we must be fully aware of the novelty of what we are trying to achieve. The experiment we are engaged in is undoubtedly difficult, but it is important.

Our five institutions have signed an agreement – which you will find in the small dossier we have distributed – for starting up a doctoral programme as the first step in the establishment of a full-blown and permanent European doctoral school. We have devised, as you can see, an initially light, flexible but well-defined structure, to which we hope to give increasing force and autonomy in the future.

The programme is coordinated directly by the presidents of the five institutions, who, every two years, elect a programme director from amongst their number, and by a Council of Scholars – meeting today for the first time – made up of five representatives from each institution, all of whom are eminent academics with extensive international experience.

This council has an essential task, which we will begin to carry out as of today: to define the educational profile of the programme, to approve a scale of priorities, to decide which colleagues should implement it, and to make our network efficient and operative.

As you know, a good deal has already been done, and so the council that is convening today is not starting from scratch but joining work in progress. The presidents of our institutions have in fact drawn up a preliminary draft outline for two doctorates, each organized into several curricula, as an initial educational plan of the programme. And one of these doctorates has already

activated a curriculum in modern history, devoted to Europe and the invention of modernity. It is coordinated by Jacques Revel, who is a member of our council and a professor at both the EHESS and the SUM, and by a Faculty Council formed by representatives from all five institutions. The students were recruited last December in Paris, resulting in the selection of four scholars from around the world, each with a scholarship grant. The teaching programme has just recently started in Florence, and involves professors from all of our institutions. In a few minutes, Jacques Revel will report on this in greater detail and describe the originality of the educational model we are testing.

Our first objective is to set up a curriculum in the social sciences alongside the one in modern history, so as to give greater substance to the profile of the programme. The presidents of our institutions had an initial and very fruitful exchange of ideas at a recent meeting in Budapest. The possibility emerged that the second curriculum might deal with the sociology of religions, which for various reasons seemed to everyone to be particularly promising. In our discussion this morning we will look more closely at this issue, and I hope we will be able to reach a decision.

We also have to address a crucial funding problem.

As you probably know, the budget of the doctoral curriculum in modern history is currently being covered entirely by the Istituto Italiano di Scienze Umane, both in the form of public funds and, though only in small measure, with private resources. The SUM also meets the cost of a small office for the management of the doctoral programme, which is indispensable for the efficient coordination of the work of this council and that of the Board of Directors. We believe this choice is fully justified by the importance we attribute to the initiative. But clearly the SUM cannot take on anything more, and as it is we are already stretched to the limit.

We must make a determined effort to secure funding from the European Community, both in relation to the individual doctoral curricula and as regards the project for the doctoral school as a whole. Last year, President Waquet and

myself had some preliminary, positive contacts with functionaries from the European Community in Brussels, though there have not yet been any appreciable results due to the difficulty of finding an exact position for our project within the parameters laid down by Brussels. However, we need to keep plugging away in this direction, joining forces and combining our respective energies and contacts. And I believe that if it is decided to activate a second doctoral curriculum, we will have to immediately set up a joint task force to accompany our curriculum with an application for funding in the framework of Erasmus Mondus. We must also evaluate the possibility of using “national” resources made available by each of our institutions.

I believe the following two years will be decisive for the destiny of our project. We need to consolidate the results that have already been achieved, to broaden the framework of our educational activities and obtain further funding. These are tough goals. But I believe that we are fully committed to pursuing them. And we are also firmly convinced that we are on the right track. With everyone’s help, I am sure things will work out for the best.

Prof. Aldo Schiavone

Director of the European Doctoral Programme

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