Transfrontier Research: joint-PhDs

The University of Pau and the Pays de l'Adour has the privilege of being part of a unique border area, that, on the Spanish side, goes from Basque country, to Navarra and to Aragon. UPPA strongly encourages cooperation with the universities of these regions. In particular, UPPA maintains various forms of inter-university cooperation with:

* the University of the Basque Country (UPV-HEU) with its campuses in Bilbao, San Sebastian, Vitoria,
* the University of Zaragoza (UNIZAR), with campuses in Zaragoza, Huesca and Teruel, and
* the Public University of Navarra (UPNA).

Development of transfrontier joint-PhDs

Until 2009, only one transfrontier joint-PhD had been defended, as well as a few jointly advised dissertations.

Thus, in order to strengthen ties between research teams and to significantly increase the number of joint-PhDs, thematic workshops were organized in 2009 and 2010. Nearly 70 faculty members and administrative personnel participated in these meetings, which identified possible areas of collaboration.

The workshops revealed many areas of complementarity in research between the French and Spanish teams. A collective decision was made, among the partner institutions (the
University of Zaragoza and the University of the Basque Country), to actively encourage the development of joint-PhDs.

The doctoral schools of the UPPA and its transfrontier partners worked together to forge a common framework for doctoral programs in order to provide PhD students with an international research curriculum in a large number of disciplines. The creation of these joint-PhDs, intended to attract high-level students who are interested in a European doctoral education, was also intended to consolidate the relationships between research teams. An example convention was drafted with each of the UPPA's partners.

A protocol for the attribution of joint-PhDs has been officialized since the 2012-2013 university year with the creation of a joint call for candidatures by the UPPA and the University of the Basque Country, and the creation of a joint commission for the attribution of doctoral grants for joint-PhDs. Each year, the call for projects for joint-PhDs UPPA-UPV/ EHU allows for grants for six candidates (three financed by UPPA, and three by UPV/EHU). A similar call for projects with the University of Zaragoza could not be created due to budget limitations on the Spanish side. However, in spite of this, joint-PhDs have been started between the two universities.

In total, 44 joint-PhDs have been co-financed since 2010-211, 34 with the University of the Basque Country and 10 with the University of Zaragoza.

Call for projects UPPA/UPV-EHU

In 2012, UPPA and the University of the Basque Country also established a call for joint projects whose goal is to encourage faculty from both universities to develop, together, candidatures for European projects (INTERREG POCTEFA or H2020).
To accomplish this, each year the two universities come together to provide 50,000 euros. A joint commission made up of the vice-presidents of Research and two additional members meets to evaluate the proposals, based on pre-defined criteria: the quality of the proposal, the strategies for being competitive in the pursuit of European Union grants, the experience of the project leads in each university...

Each project chosen project obtains a 6,000 euro grant. The project leads have one year to draft a European proposal. If no European proposal is submitted after the year of preparation, the project leads are required to reimburse the grant in its entirety.

Since 2012, 15 such projects have been financed, in a wide variety of fields: law, analytic chemistry, biology, material science and engineering, philology, computer science, economics, basque. Seven European proposals have been submitted (POCTEFA, H2020-ITN-EJD, H2020 Marie Curie, RISE). Of these projects, two were finally selected: one Marie-Curie project in mathematics and on POCTEFA project in material science and engineering.

These grants have also helped encourage collaboration between the teams, through joint publications (for example, a book on cultural rights and democratization), seminars organized in common (for example, a seminar on the "cross-border comparison France-Spain of management tools in public health instutitions), by helping researchers from the UPV/EHU visit UPPA, and joint-PhDs.