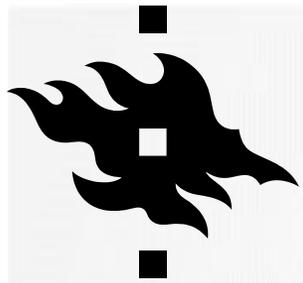




HOW TO DEVELOP EU LEVEL GRADUATE TRACKING FOR DOCTORAL GRADUATES

THE FIFTH NATIONAL DOCTORAL
EDUCATION DAY 8.10.2020

ERIC CARVER



AGENDA

- Quick reminder:
Doctoral graduate tracking in Finland
- EU graduate tracking: short history and key objectives
- Work of the Expert Group
 - Challenges
 - Key recommendations
- Doctoral Graduate Tracking at the EU level – key questions going forward
- [Sources for reading](#)

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surveys of universities in Finland

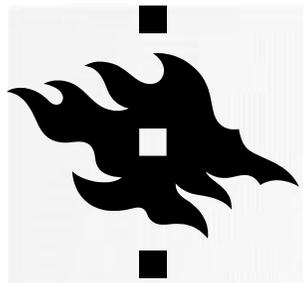
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QUICK REMINDER: DOCTORAL GRADUATE TRACKING IN FINLAND

Register-based tracking (Statistics Finland)

- Official Statistics of Finland (OSF): *Transition from school to further education and work statistics* cover all graduates (VET and HEI sector, including doctoral graduates).
- Statistics Finland statistics on placement after graduation available in [Vipunen](#).

Survey-based tracking (universities, Aarresaari Network)

- [National doctoral graduate career monitoring surveys](#) are done every year. Results in [Vipunen](#).
- Target group: doctoral graduates who have graduated 3 years ago.
- The data is collected in a nationwide and central manner by Research Stats Service TUPA of the University of Tampere and CSC – the IT Centre for Science, in collaboration with the career monitoring group of the Aarresaari, Career Services Network of Finnish Universities.

The Finnish position: doctoral graduates should be a part of *possible* EU level graduate tracking.

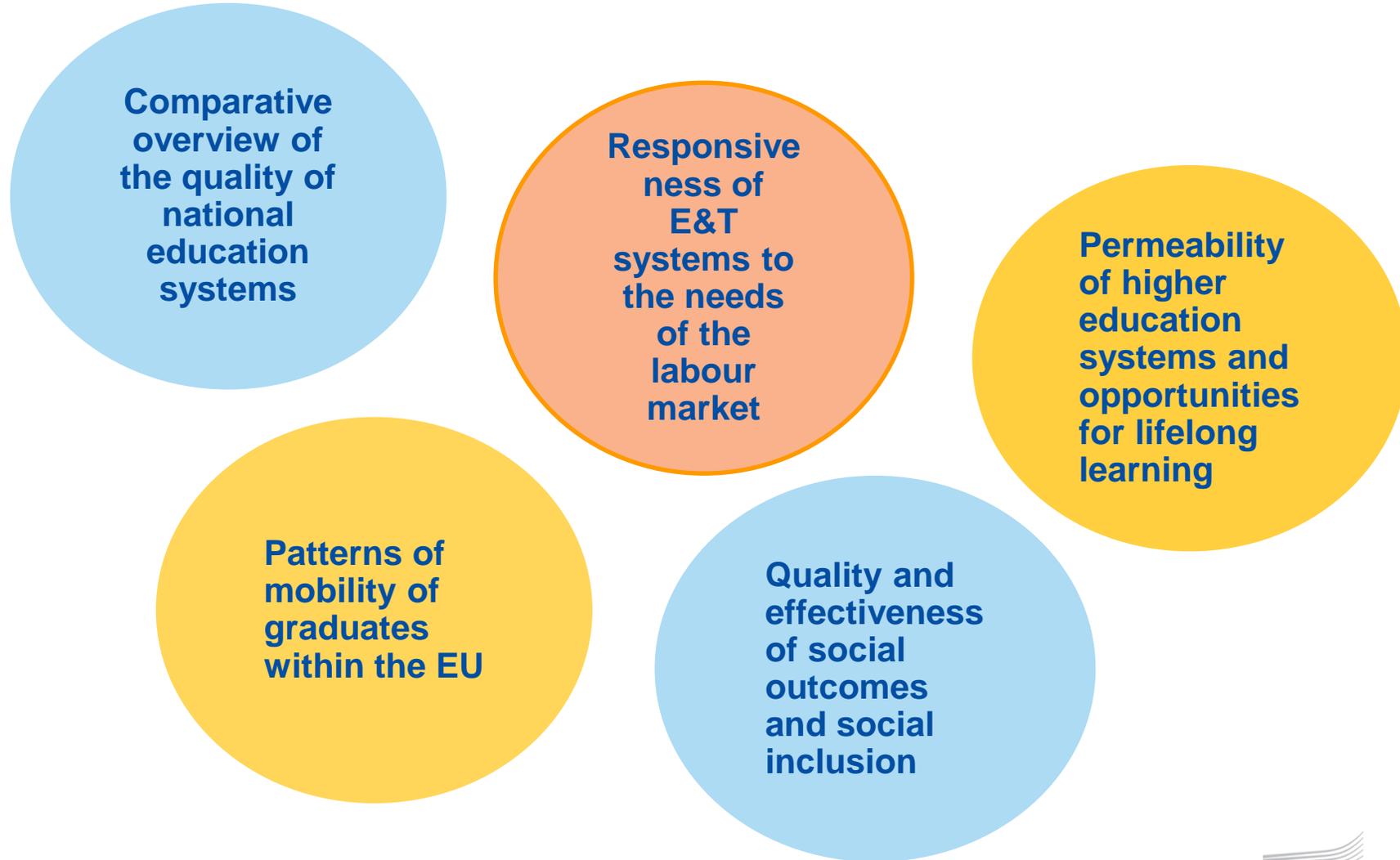
EU graduate tracking policy objectives

[The 2017 Council Recommendation](#) invited Member States to take steps to ensure the timely, regular, and broad dissemination and exploitation of the results of their analysis of data from their graduate tracking system(s), with the objective of:

- strengthening **career guidance** for prospective students, current students and graduates;
- supporting the design and updating of curricula to improve the **acquisition of relevant skills and employability**;
- **improving skills matching** to support competitiveness and innovation at the local, regional and national level, and to **resolve skills shortages**;
- **planning for and forecasting evolving employment, educational and social needs**;
- **contributing to policy development at both the national and EU level.**



Why comparative EU data on graduate outcomes?





Implementation of Council Recommendation on tracking graduates – 3 workstrands



1. European expert group on graduate tracking
2018-2020 (6 meetings by September 2020)



2. Pilot European graduate survey
launched January 2018 in 8 pilot countries, results in 2020



3. Provide capacity building support including a
comprehensive mapping across Member States

**Please note that
Final report has not
published yet!**
Issues in this
presentation are
subject to possible
changes.

Please see

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on tracking graduates (20 November 2017)

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32017H1209%2801%29>

Why doctoral graduates were left out of the Eurograduate pilot? (European Commission)

→ Council recommendation on tracking graduates is applicable also to ISCED level 8 graduates.

→ [The pilot European graduate survey \(EGS\) feasibility study](#) found that a clear majority of ministries and stakeholders interviewed wanted a European graduate survey to include ISCED level 8 (Doctoral or equivalent) graduates as well.

→ **However, methodological constraints led to the exclusion of this group in the pilot** for the following reasons:

→ **Doctoral graduates a very different group** compared to BA and MA graduates. During their studies many of them are already employed or work as researchers.

→ **A questionnaire for PhD graduates would need to differ from a questionnaire focusing on BA and MA graduates** in contents, phrasing, and answer categories. This could be accounted for, but would complicate the overall questionnaire design and survey implementation.

→ Another problem related to the operational feasibility is that **PhD graduates are often hard to get hold of (lack of contact details)**.

→ Requiring countries to cover this group and attain response rates matching high quality standards would thus come at **a relatively high cost.**”

Graduate tracking Expert Group mandate



Task Force to study options on comparable European graduate data



Task Force to discuss the tracking of mobile graduate learners and employees



Task Force to explore tracking through administrative data



Task Force to design principles and standards for tracking VET graduates

Finland had 2 country representatives in the Expert Group, nominated by The Ministry of Education and Culture

Co-chair Eric Carver



University of Helsinki, Aarresaari Network
→ Alternate member Tomi Halonen,
The Ministry of Education and Culture)

Member Tomi Kytölä



The Ministry of Education and Culture

Mandate of Task force 1

- The task force had a task to “examine different ways of organising a graduate outcomes data collection at EU level”. In examining the different options, the group assessed the potential of each approach and the strengths and weaknesses for the EU and for national systems. In this work, they took into account the policy priorities of the EU, of the Member States and other EEA countries and of other potential users of EU-level graduate outcomes data.
- **Option 1: a European graduate outcomes project where data already collected through national surveys and/or administrative data matching is collated and made available (possibly accompanied by a technical or substantive report);**
- **Option 2: a European-wide graduate survey along the lines of the EUROGRADUATE Pilot Survey, but covering all Member States and other EEA countries;**
- **Option 3: a combination of nationally available data on graduate outcomes with a European survey or a European set of survey questions to be gradually integrated into national surveys.**

Challenges during our work

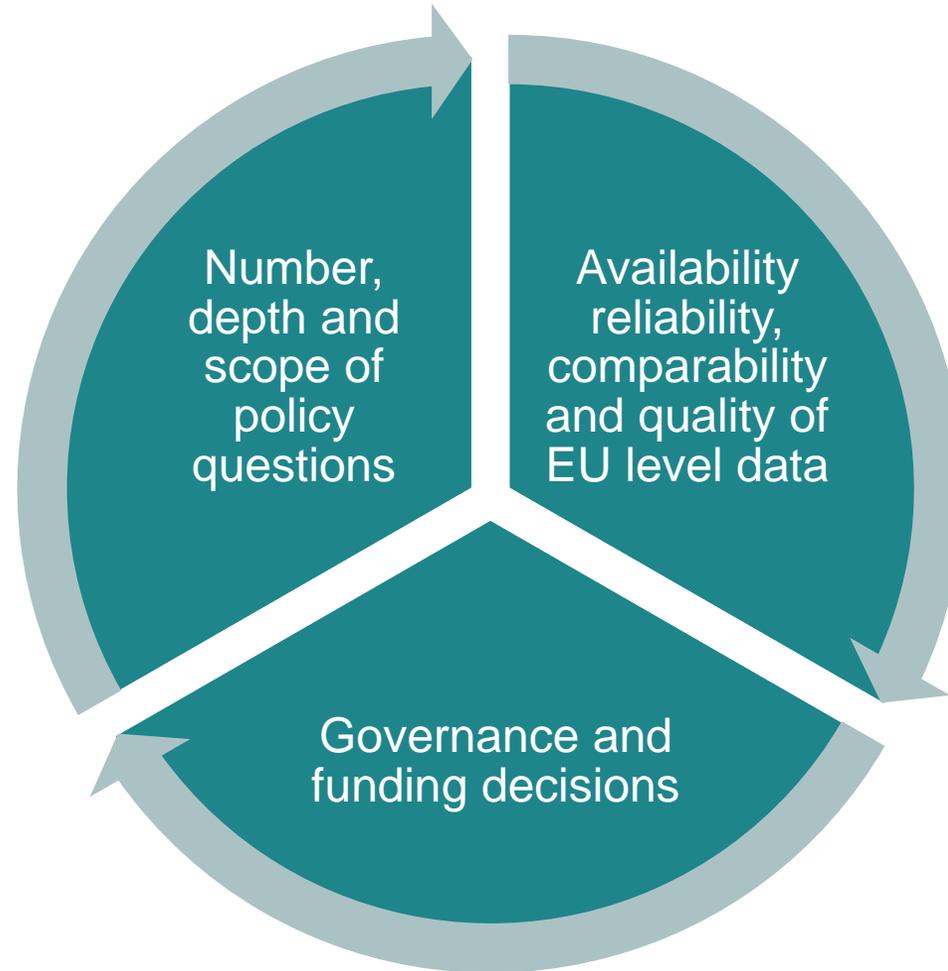
- Key challenge in our work: ***Everything* is interconnected**
- What Member States, other EEA countries, EU and key stakeholders want and are willing to invest & commit in?
- How to develop both the EU level and national graduate tracking systems with limited resources?

Key challenge in our work

Everything is interconnected

Source: Task force 1 - options on comparable European graduate data.
Presentation by Taskforce1 co-chair Eric Carver, Sep 22 2020.

*Nothing is solved before
everything is solved.*



What Member States, other EEA countries, EU and key stakeholders want and are willing to invest & commit in?

Number, depth and scope of policy questions

1. High number of questions, low quality of data

2. Low number of questions, low quality of data

Quality data requires resources and commitment from EU, MS and stakeholders

4. High number of questions, high quality of data

3. Low number of questions, high quality of data

Our view: **Gradual approach is best**

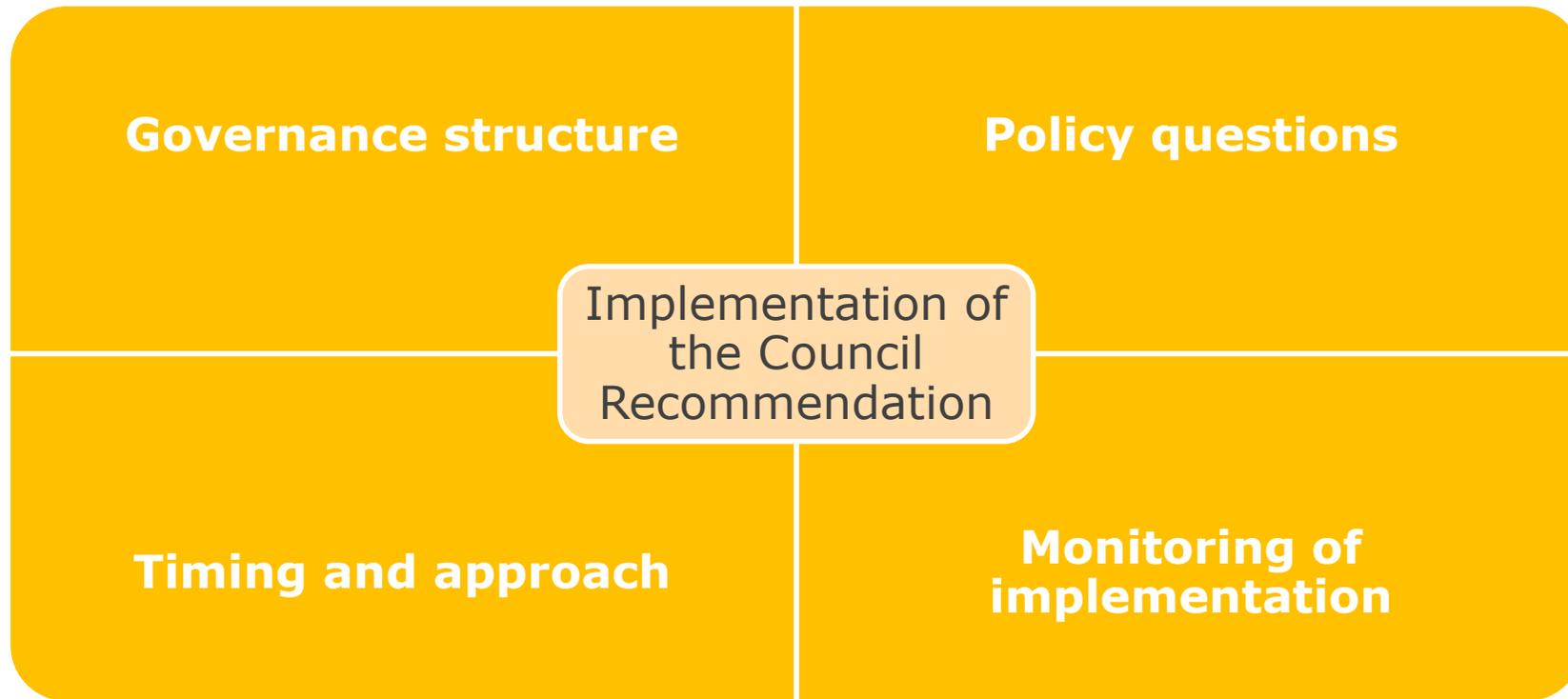
Level of representativeness, quality, reliability and comparability of data. For example, availability of administrative data, survey answer rate,

How to develop EU level and national graduate tracking systems together?

- **Contexts vary.** There are significant differences in the existing graduate tracking systems in Member States and other EEA countries and in the organisation, governance, quality assurance and qualifications offered by higher and vocational education institutions.
- **Concerns vary.** Especially, EU Member States and other EEA countries with established and existing graduate tracking systems have substantial concerns toward a new European graduate tracking initiative.
 - **Systemic concerns.** Is a European graduate survey a risk to existing national surveys due to survey fatigue?
 - **Cost-benefit and financial concerns.** What is the true added value and cost-benefit of a European level system (in comparison to existing national systems)? Who pays for the European level system?
 - **Data protection and GDPR concerns.** Who owns, manages and has access the European level data?
 - **Quality concerns.** Will a new European level system produce representative, reliable and comparable data? Low response rate and long survey length concerns based on the *Eurograduate* experience.
 - **Political concerns.** How will European level data be used, and for what purposes?



Final recommendations of the Expert Group- building blocks





Policy questions

Essential information

Socio-economic information

Employment

Education

Mobility

Recommended information

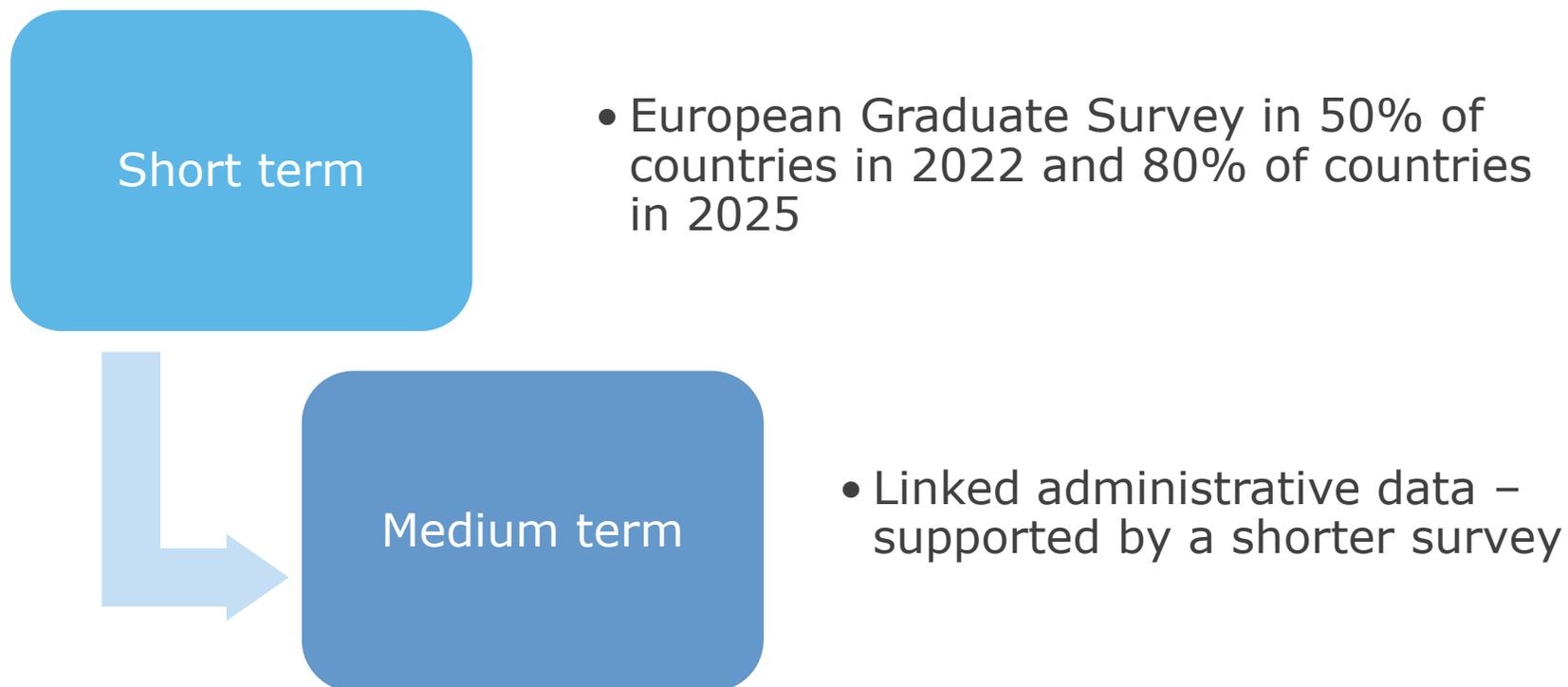
Skills perception

Quality and relevance of education

Reasons behind mobility



Gradual approach



Step 1: Short term - an EU graduate survey

- In the short term, only an European EU graduate survey can generate comparable graduate tracking data, especially for countries that have no graduate tracking systems in place.
- **EU level survey should be done every 4 years, target cohorts 1 and 5 years after graduation.**
- **Target groups: HEI bachelor, master and doctoral level graduates,** (also possibly VET graduates)
- **Participation *voluntary*.** The European Commission should encourage participation with the aim of gradually achieving full coverage for all EU and other EEA members,
- **Important to ensure that the statistical process** for selecting graduates is based on a rigorous sampling methodology to allow for the collection of representative data rather than being based on the pragmatic availability of graduate contact information.
- **Fundamental to design the questionnaire properly**, to ensure that the relevant “policy questions” can be assessed, that the questionnaires are coherent across Member States and other EEA countries and that high response rates are obtained in individual Member States and other EEA countries.

Implementation and integration of a European Graduate Survey with national graduate tracking measures: a modular approach

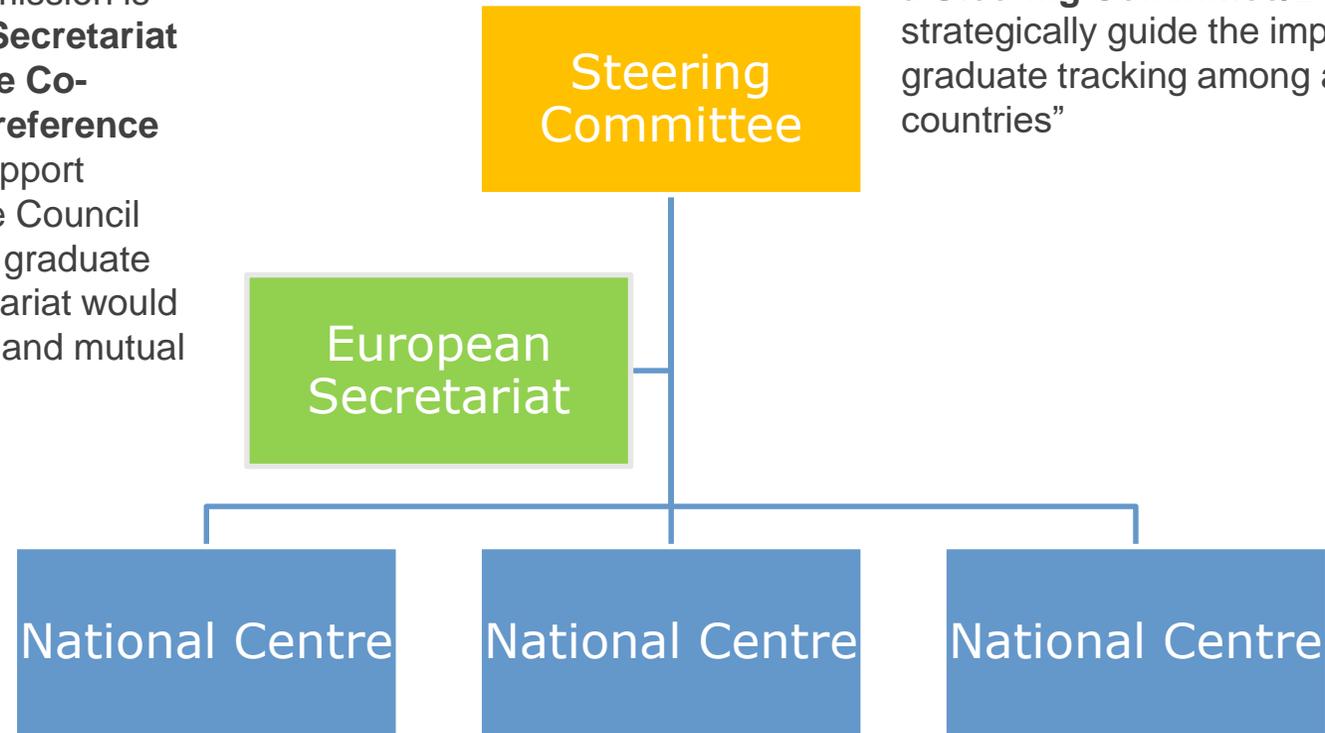
The Expert Group has considered various options for the integration of the national and European graduate surveys and it recommends the following solution:

- 1) EU Member States and other EEA countries that do not have a graduate survey in place adopt the European Graduate Survey, with the possibility of expanding the list of data requirements in light of national policies and interests.
- 2) EU Member States and other EEA countries that do have in place national graduate surveys and that wish to participate in the European Graduate Survey, have one of the options below:
 - A. Stop running their national graduate survey** in the year in which the European Graduate Survey is carried forward and only run the latter. **Or decide to run parallel national and EU level surveys.**
 - B. National questions added into the EU survey.** Add a national module to the European Graduate Survey, in the year in which the latter is run. In the national module, participating countries can add data requirements that are of national interest. Since the European Graduate Survey is designed to ensure cross-country comparability, the addition of national modules will affect cross-country comparability of these modules only.
 - C. EU data needs met with national surveys.** Gather the needed information with a national survey, for example by adding an European module to the national graduate survey, in order to guarantee that comparable data on (at least) the Essential background information (A). It is within the limits of the Member States to use existing instruments of data collection adapted to the national context to collect all or parts of the data. In this case it is important to ensure that the data gathered through the European module are fully comparable across countries, which require collaboration of Member States and other EEA countries. Member States making use of this option need to provide evidence that their data is fully comparable



Governance structure

“The European Commission is invited to **provide a Secretariat to the network of the Co-ordination Centres/reference points**, in order to support implementation of the Council Recommendation on graduate tracking. This Secretariat would facilitate cooperation and mutual learning...”



“The network of Graduate Tracking Coordination Centres/reference points the network’s Secretariat are invited to create **a Steering Committee/Board**, to strategically guide the implementation of graduate tracking among all participating countries”

“Member States and other EEA countries are invited to establish, where it does not exist, a **Graduate Tracking Co-ordination Centre or reference point** for both higher and vocational education and training.”



Next steps

- Finalisation of the Expert Group report (October 2020)
- Setting up of the new governance structure (mid 2021)
- Contract for the European graduate survey (mid 2021)
- The first European survey data collection (autumn 2022)
- Capacity building in Member States (ongoing until 2022)

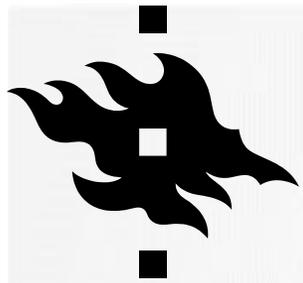
European Graduate tracking project – state of play doctoral candidates: (European Commission)

“We will seriously consider including the doctoral graduate body into the European-wide survey, at least as a pilot or in some countries, in particular because of the rising number of PhD graduates and the potentially interesting findings from a comparison of PhD graduate pathways with BA and MA pathways that we already have in the survey.

We also have the possibility to offer capacity building to countries in the course of 2021 that want to build their capacities for tracking PhD graduates as part of our contract with Ecorys. Countries should be made aware of this option.

Questions from the European Commission to Finland

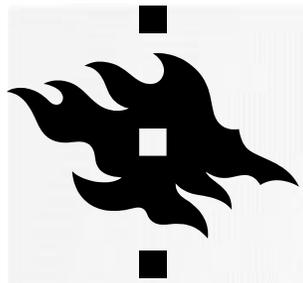
1. What are the trends in PhD graduate outcomes that are of most interest to Finland and the EU?
2. What can EU-wide graduate survey of PHD graduates learn from Finland in terms of useful questions in the questionnaire targeted at this population, in terms of achieving high response rates, in terms of comparison with non-Phd groups, in terms of possible longitudinal analysis etc?
3. Would Finland like to participate in the next wave of EU survey and if so, with PhD graduates or not?
4. What would Finland like to compare themselves to with other countries when it comes to PhD graduate pathways?



DOCTORAL GRADUATE TRACKING AT THE EU LEVEL – KEY QUESTIONS GOING FORWARD

If there is a European survey –

1. **Will doctoral graduates be included?**
2. **which countries will participate?**
3. **and which countries will include doctoral graduates?**
4. **Who pays for it?**
5. Will doctoral graduates be surveyed with a **similar questionnaire** than bachelor and master's level graduates or with **custom fitted questionnaire**?
6. Will **universities in Europe commit** to EU level graduate tracking?
6. What is the availability of and possibility to use administrative data to track doctoral graduates in different European countries? (legal, cultural, statistical contexts vary)
7. What is the connection of EU level graduate tracking to existing/ongoing/future national and EU level research on doctoral education, careers, employability and skills?
8. **Question for Finnish universities:** we currently survey doctoral graduates 3 years after graduation – time to consider moving the survey window to 1 or 5 years after graduation?



SOURCES FOR READING

Expert Group and Eurograduate

- [Testing the Feasibility of a European Graduate Study – Final report of the EUROGRADUATE feasibility study \(2016\)](#)
- [COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on tracking graduates \(20 November 2017\)](#)
- [Eurograduate pilot survey \(2020\)](#)
- [Eurograduate pilot study. Technical assessment of the pilot survey and feasibility of a full rollout \(2020\)](#)
- [Mapping the state of graduate tracking policies and practices in the EU Member States and EEA countries \(2020\)](#)
- To be published soon: **Expert group on graduate tracking FINAL REPORT**

See existing projects in the field of doctoral graduate tracking, for example

- [Mobility Patterns and Career Paths of EU Researchers](#) (EU funded project)
 - [Database of PhD-holders career tracking measures](#) (nationwide, European)
- Valuable database collected by [Iryna Degtyarova from Eurodoc](#), European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers.