

Preparing for the outside world

Lessons from the Graduate Spirit project

Graduate School Programme for International Researchers and Interdisciplinary Training

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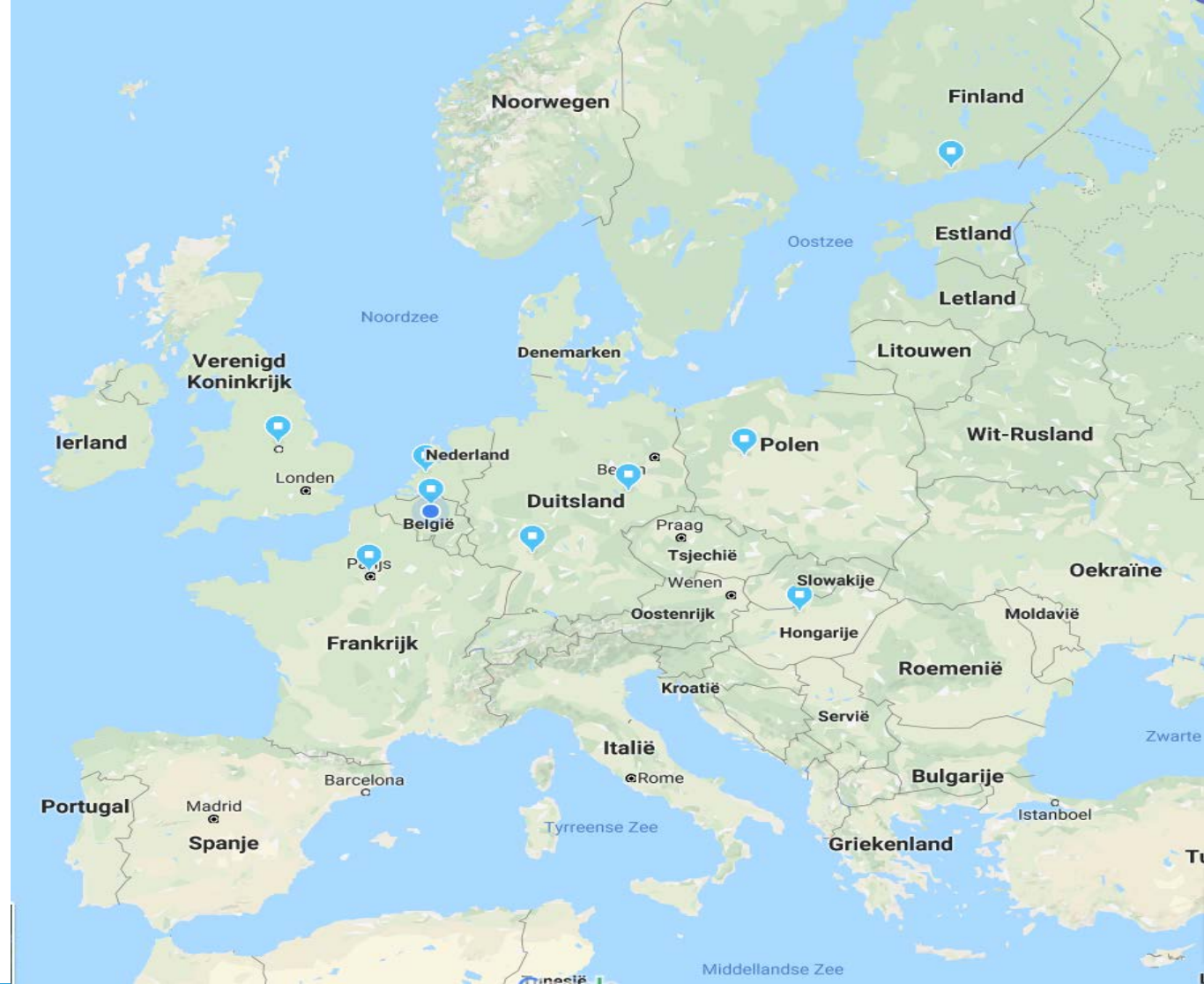


<https://www.gradspirit.eu/>



Who are we?

- *Erasmus University Rotterdam*
- Université Paris Saclay
- Leipzig University
- Loughborough University
- Central European University
- Heidelberg University
- Polish Academy for the Sciences
- University of Helsinki
- KU Leuven



What do we do

- Erasmus+ funded project, 01/09/2017 - 31/08/2020
- Good Triple-I practices in doctoral education, focusing especially on **Social Sciences and Humanities**
- The aim is that graduate schools in the SSH will improve their Triple I training at four levels:
PhD candidates, staff, curriculum and the organisation of the schools.

The Triple-I: Intersectoral training

Not common in the social sciences and humanities

- Wide diversity of disciplines
- R&D research collaboration is rare
- 'Critical' approaches

Somewhat of a deficit

- In comparison to (life) sciences and business schools
- Analysis of **practices** and **experiences**

Existing practices in SSH

Basic level practice:

- Having guest lecturers outside academia (third sector organisations, industry)
- Courses of transferrable skills that prepare PhD students for jobs outside academia.

Good Practice:

- Network of organisations and companies for regular job markets and fairs
- Building individual portfolios or 'skills-passport'

Advanced level (rare):

- Thesis committee with intersectoral mentor
- Internships or joint PhD projects > PhD Hub



Alumni experiences in SPIRIT

Spring 2020 five alumni seminars

- Current position
- Usefulness of PhD education and skills
- Recommendations for schools and PhD candidates
- How does online work for this (pre-corona)



Experiences

Kind of employment

- Public sector, NGO's, education, start-ups (and everywhere else)

Transition

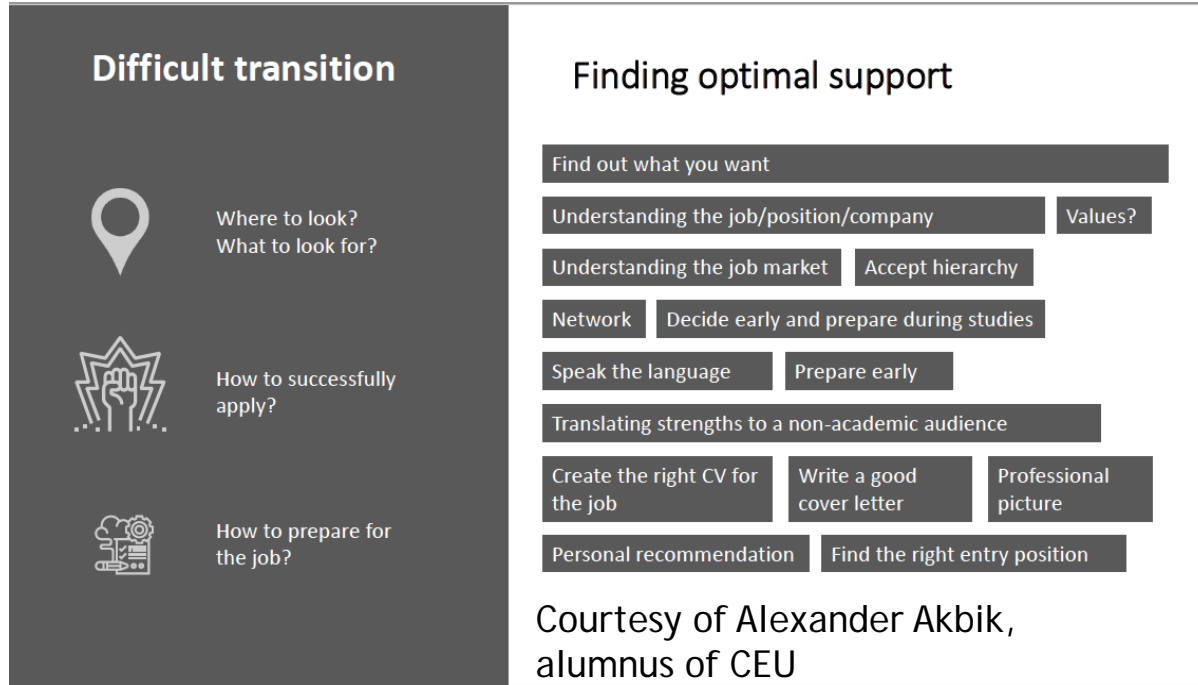
- Push rather than pull (solitary, competitive, lack of jobs)
- Status and stigmas (abstract, lack of practical skills, 'alien')
- More skills than you think, e.g. project management

Obstacles in SSH doctoral training

Mindset of supervisors and SSH system is academic

- Little structural experience with intersectoral collaboration
- Supervisors are hostile a.o. because of fear of drop-out
- No time or opportunity within trajectory
- No incentives or rewards within the trajectory
- Skills training is general, lack of sector specific training (.e.g policy making)
- Graduate School as an institution still relatively undeveloped

Recommendations for PhD-researchers



- Find out what you want
- Prepare early
- Build networks
- Find ambassadors and recommender
- Understand the job field
- Speak the language
- Accept hierarchy
- Define your skills
- Create a practical CV
- Make a professional picture

Recommendations for supervisors

Assess career perspectives early

Explicitly recognise the value of extra-curricular activities;

Allow and encourage doctoral researchers to engage with other institutions and sectors by facilitating connections

Recommendations for the curriculum

Offer more and better training of transferable skills

- Sector specific trainings
- Emphasize the value
- Preparation for job market

Organize intersectoral activities beyond the guest speaker

- I.e. hackatons, design sprints, etc...
- PhD Hubs

Recommendations for the grad schools

Relevance of alumni networks depends on the type of school
(but do organize exchanges between PhDs and alumni!)

Develop reward systems that reflect the importance of non-academic activities

Develop or support intersectoral networks

- E.g. advisory council SSH Grad School KU Leuven



KU Leuven

GS for Humanities and Social Sciences:

External stakeholders council

"Our PhD-researchers are tomorrow's young professionals, contributing to society and pursuing careers in all areas of occupation."

The external stakeholders council is an advisory body with representatives from industry, government, media, business, finance, SME, recruitment and other societal sectors.

It makes recommendations for doctoral training.

Thank you

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