European Graduate School in Animal Breeding and Genetics (EGS-ABG)

Erasmus Mundus Joint Doctoral Consortium Agreement

between

AgroParisTech (*Institut des Sciences et Industries du Vivant et de l'Environnement*)
[Paris Institute of Technology for Life, Food and Environmental Sciences, abbreviated as APT]
Coordinator of the Consortium, named hereinafter "Coordinator"

Aarhus *Universitet*
[Aarhus University, abbreviated as AU]

Sveriges Lantbruksuniversitet, Uppsala
[Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, abbreviated as SLU]

Wageningen University
[abbreviated as WU]

the *Directeur Général* of AgroParisTech,

the Dean of the Faculty of Science and Technology of Aarhus *Universitet,*

the Vice-Chancellor of *Sveriges Lantbruksuniversitet,*

the Rector Magnificus or the President of the Executive Board of Wageningen University,

it has been agreed what follows.

1. General objective

In the context of the creation of the European Higher Education and Research Area (the Bologna process), the present agreement aims at facilitating the cooperation in education of doctoral candidates among the partners in the field of animal breeding and genetics.

2. General commitment

Towards this objective, the partners commit themselves to:

a. exchange their experiences in the application of the Bologna process and in particular in their approaches to evaluation of doctoral education;
b. promote, within current regulations in each country, the participation of teaching and research staff of the partner universities in supervision, courses, seminars and conferences they organize.

3. Collaboration on a joint doctorate program

This Agreement is drafted within the framework of the action entitled: "European Graduate School Animal Breeding and Genetics(EGS-ABG)" based on Framework Partnership Agreement number 2011-023 (hereinafter referred to as "FPA Agreement") between Coordinator and the Commission of the European Communities (hereinafter referred to as "Commission") and all related Specific Grant Agreements from 2011 on for Erasmus Mundus Joint Doctorate and Scholarships (hereinafter referred to as "SGA Agreements".

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The Coordinator is bound by the terms and conditions of the FPA Agreement and further amendments. Each Partner shall be bound in applicable parts by the terms and conditions of the FPA Agreement and amendments to the FPA Agreement, approved by all Partners when applicable. The Partners shall not act in any way that could risk the fulfilment of the Coordinator's duties and obligations under the FPA Agreement. On the basis of the present Consortium Agreement, the Partners shall together contribute to the achievement of the requirements of the FPA Agreement in accordance with the terms and conditions as stated in the present Agreement.

4. Consortium organization

The Consortium has a joint governance structure with joint selection, admission, supervision, monitoring and assessment procedures. The governance structure is (see also Annex 1):

a. The coordinating institution of the Consortium is AgroParisTech. It hosts the Consortium Executive Secretariat.

b. The Consortium appoints an Executive Board, in charge of coordinating the program, elaborating the strategic plan, managing the quality insurance process, supervising the thesis assessment process of each doctoral candidate, managing financial issues and reporting to the EACEA. The Executive Board comprises one Professor or Senior scientist from each Partner Institution and is chaired by the EGS-ABG coordinator.

c. The Consortium appoints a Selection Committee in charge of managing the selection of PhD projects and the selection of Doctoral Candidates. The Selection Committee comprises at least one Professor or Senior scientist from each Partner Institution and is chaired by a person from a Partner Institution.

d. The Consortium appoints an Education Committee in charge of elaborating and updating the portfolio of courses and of monitoring the implementation of the individual training plan of each doctoral candidate. The Education Committee comprises at least Professor or Senior scientist from each Partner Institution and is chaired by a person from a Partner Institution.

e. The Executive Board and the Selection and Education Committees meet at least once a year.

f. For any decision the Executive Board, the Selection Committee or the Education Committee takes, the four Partner Institutions must be represented. Decision making is based on reaching a consensus. In case of severe difficulties to find an agreement, the decision is taken after a vote (one voice per person, majority required).

g. Cooperation with associate partners will be specified in separate associate partner agreements.

5. Joint selection and admission

a. There is one joint selection and admission process, once a year, under the responsibility of the Selection Committee.

b. The joint selection process comprises 8 steps:

1st. A joint EGS-ABG call for PhD projects is opened and the proposed projects are submitted via an online application procedure.

2nd. Each proposed PhD project is evaluated by two independent experts and the best PhD projects are selected by the Selection Committee.

3rd. A joint EGS-ABG call for doctoral candidates is opened and students apply via an online application procedure.

4th. Applications are screened for eligibility by the Coordinator.

5th. Each eligible applicant is scored for competitiveness by two assessors from the Consortium and a list of preselected applicants is established by the Selection Committee.

6th. The preselected applicants having applied for a given PhD project are ranked for suitability by the supervisors of this project.

7th. Preselected applicants are jointly interviewed by colleagues from the consortium and the supervisors, using common rules, interview guideline and evaluation form.

8th. On the basis of the results of the previous steps (5^{th}, 6^{th} and 7^{th}), the Selection Committee selects the best project/applicant combinations, and draws up a list of received applicants for a fellowship, with the corresponding PhD project, plus a reserve list.

c. Within 2 weeks after receipt of the final decision by the Selection Committee, the chosen applicants must indicate their decision. After final validation by the EACEA, the selected doctoral candidates are then enrolled at two host partner institutions, in accordance with institutional-level admittance procedures.

d. The Consortium clearly defines the candidate's and supervisors' obligations in the Doctoral Candidate Agreement, signed by the EGS-ABG coordinator, the doctoral candidate and the two supervisors (Annex 2).

e. The details for the use, management and reporting of each fellowship, as well as any Co-funder are specified in the EGS-ABG Partner Institution Contract for Individual Doctoral Candidate (Annex 3).

6. Joint supervision

a. Each doctoral candidate is supervised by two supervisors, one from each of the two Partner Institutions where the candidate undertakes the research work. These two supervisors are responsible vis-à-vis host institutions and EGS-ABG. They are committed to providing favorable conditions of supervision to the doctoral candidate during the whole duration of the program and are responsible for the scientific quality of the thesis, as defined in the Doctoral Candidate Agreement. The position of a supervisor is in accordance with the rules of his/her Institution. According to national rules, a distinction can be made between an "official" supervisor and a "daily" supervisor.

b. In addition, a Thesis Advisory Board is established for each doctoral candidate at the beginning of the program. This Board comprises international independent experts, including at least one person from the animal breeding industry. The composition of the Thesis Advisory Board is under the responsibility of both supervisors and must be communicated to the EGS-ABG Executive Board within the first three months of the program. This Board will meet at least once year and evaluates the progress of the research activities in accordance with the project descriptors and of the training program.

c. The implementation of a "go/no go" procedure during the program depends on the rules at the "first" host institution, as defined in the employment contract. In case where a doctoral candidate, at any time during the course of the program, shows a serious breach of his/her duties, as defined in the Doctoral Candidate Agreement, the supervisors must alert the EGS-ABG Executive Board, which appoints a mediator who meets the different involved parties.

d. The members of the Consortium engage themselves in helping doctoral candidates with incoming procedures such as finding housing and ensure that doctoral candidates will have access to language courses, libraries and canteens as well as to the services of the respective International Offices.

e. In case of conflict between a doctoral candidate and his/her supervisors, the Executive Board will appoint a mediator who will meet all involved parties. According to the report of the mediator, the Executive Board will take the necessary decisions.

7. Joint monitoring and assessment

a. There is one joint EGS-ABG monitoring and assessment procedure. This is in addition to the regular institution-level regulations and mechanisms.

b. The monitoring and assessment of individual doctoral candidate performance are under the responsibilities of the Education Committee, on the basis of a mid-term report provided by the doctoral candidate. The requirements for thesis submissions are:
   - The submitted thesis must have at least two accepted papers plus two submitted papers, including 3 papers with the candidate as first author. Here, only papers accepted or submitted in international peer review journals are considered. If applicable, a patent is accounted as one paper.
   - Before submission, the thesis must be validated by both supervisors.
   - The thesis cannot be submitted without the final validation of the Individual Training Plan by the Education Committee. In case where the realized plan is considered incomplete, the Education Committee can ask the doctoral candidate for additional training.

c. Before to be defended, the thesis is evaluated by 4 independent referees, among whom 3 have a position of full or associate Professor or Senior Scientist (or equivalent). The report by the referees must be sent to the EGS-ABG Executive Board no later than one month after receipt of the thesis and at least six weeks before the planned date for the thesis defense. On the basis of the 4 reports by the referees, the EGS-ABG Executive Board will write a recommendation about the thesis defense. This recommendation is sent with the reports to the competent authorities of each host institution, who take the final decision.

d. The composition of the Assessment Committee is proposed by the supervisors of the doctoral candidate and is submitted for approval by the Executive Board and the competent authorities at each of the two host institutions. According to the rules of the host institutions, the Assessment Committee may comprise at least 2 among the 4 referees who have reviewed the thesis (see § 7.c). The Assessment Committee will be in charge of making the final decision to award (or not) the doctoral candidate and the qualification of the diploma (if any).

e. There is a single thesis defense, which is to be held at the "first" host institution. The language of the defense is English. The thesis defense is organized according to the rules and usages of the "first" institution.

f. Within two weeks after the defense, the Assessment Committee will send a motivated report including its formal decision, to the EGS-ABG Executive Secretariat and to the competent authorities of each host institution.

8. Financial issues

a. All participating Consortium Partners confirm that enrolled doctoral candidates will be able to graduate, upon successful academic performance, within the formal framework provided by the EM fellowships. In case of lacking financial funding, each participating institution confirms that adequate financial resources will be secured before enrollment.

b. University fees will be set and charged by the first host Institution, in accordance with national legislation. In cases where fees exceed the fixed contribution level specified in the Erasmus Mundus 2009-13 Program Guide, the excess amount is covered through the funds raised before enrollment.

c. Doctoral candidates enrolled in the EMJD EGS-ABG Program are guaranteed social security coverage, including health coverage, work accident insurance and provision of parental leave, in accordance with national legislation.

d. Financial management mechanisms are specified in the Financial and Administrative Handbook (Annex 4).

9. Language policy

The EGS-ABG working language is English. Every candidate of the EMJD EGS-ABG Program will be offered the possibility to follow his/her entire education in English and high proficiency in English is a requirement for admission. The Partner Institutions promote training in the national language.

10. Degree delivery

a. To complete the EMJD EGS-ABG Doctoral Program, each candidate must acquire the equivalent of 30 ECTS credits for courses. The education program of each doctoral candidate has to be formally approved by the EGS-ABG Education Committee.

b. Thereupon successful candidates are awarded a double or joint degree (according to national legislation of the host institutions) and a diploma supplement. The diploma supplement describes (*i*) the overall organization of the EMJD EGS-ABG doctorate program and the added value it brings to the candidate, and (*ii*) the details of the candidate's education.

c. The Partners fully and automatically recognize doctoral candidate courses, that are developed for the EM JD EGS-ABG program as well as examinations passed at the other institutions of the Consortium.

d. Each Partner – where applicable – has signed a letter of national validation certifying that the final degree awarded to the successful EGS-ABG candidates will be its national doctoral degree.

e. The EMJD EGS-ABG Consortium will actively work towards delivering a Joint Degree (consisting of one independent degree issued by the two host institutions) across all participating institutions, as soon as national legislation allows this.

11. Further collaboration

Partners will promote through their International Offices (or equivalent) the creation of integrated language programs and cultural integration as well as the creation of means for disseminating "good practices" and administrative procedures, aimed at improving methods of hosting doctoral candidates from third-countries or in mobility. Further collaboration will be encouraged.

12. Means and facilities

Partners find the means to accompany the EMJD EGS-ABG program, in particular by:

- reserving a sufficient number of education places including high quality supervisory capacity,
- assist in finding housing for all doctoral candidates,
- applying, when possible, for additional grants to support the implementation of the program,
- offering easily accessible contact points for "out-of-town" doctoral candidates,
- advertising the EMJD EGS-ABG program widely.

13. General provisions

The present agreement takes effect when all four partners have signed it, and it will remain in effect as long the EMJD EGS-ABG is active, i.e. for an expected period of 9 years (5 years of accreditation plus 4 years for awarding the last group of candidates enrolled in the program).

In case of organizational or administrative changes at a given Partner, this Partner will inform the other Partners and the Executive Board. If required, an addendum or a modification will be introduced in the present Consortium Agreement.

Modifications or addenda to the present agreement will need the written previous consent of all four partners and must be executed in writing.

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14. Responsibilities, applicable law, and liabilities

a. Each Partner undertakes to take part in the efficient implementation of the program, and to cooperate, perform and fulfill, promptly and on time, all of its obligations under the EC-GA and this Consortium Agreement as may be reasonably required from it and in a manner of good faith.

b. Each Partner operating as a host institution will perform and fulfill all of its obligations under the specific PhD project, in a manner of good faith as prescribed by the national laws of the first host institution. The partners being host institution in a specific PhD project will hold harmless the other Partners against all third party claims, including claims of doctoral candidates under the project, relating to the specific PhD project. Within a specified PhD project the both host institutions will be responsible to the proper performance and fulfillment of their tasks as specified in the agreements related to such specific PhD project. The host institutions will hold harmless each other for all third party claims, including claims from their doctoral candidate, relating to their own tasks and obligations under the specific PhD project.

c. No Party shall be liable to any other Party for any indirect or consequential loss or similar damage such as, but not limited to, loss of profit, loss of revenue or loss of contracts, provided such damage was not caused by a willful act or by a breach of confidentiality.

d. A Party's aggregate liability towards the other Parties collectively shall be limited to the maximum coverage of its third party liability insurance.

15. Dispute resolution and applicable law

a. Partners will try to settle their conflicts arising from this Consortium Agreement by mediation. Whenever Partners don't reach a settlement by mediation, they will submit their dispute to the competent court in Brussels.

b. Individual PhD Projects will be governed by the national law of the first host institution. The Host institutions will try to settle their conflicts arising from an individual PhD Project by mediation. Whenever host institutions don't reach a settlement by mediation, they will submit their dispute to the competent court in the city or region in which the first host institution has its registered office.

Signatures

AgroParisTech

Name: Marc MICHEL

Position: Directeur Général par intérim

Place: Paris

Date: 13 juillet 2011

Signature and stamp:

AgroParisTech
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Aarhus University

Name: BRIAN BECH NIELSEN

Position: DEAN

Place: AARHUS, DENMARK

Date: 20/6-2011

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Faculty of Agricultural Sciences
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Signature and stamp:

Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Name:

Position: Vice-Chancellor

Place: Uppsala, Sweden

Date: June 9th, 2011

Signature and stamp:

SLU
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Wageningen University

Name: Dr. A.A. Dijkhuizen

Position: Chairman Executive Board

Place: Wageningen

Date: 7 July, 2011

Signature and stamp:

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