Privately funded PhD in France

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Contents

- My PhD
- Benefits of working with a company
- Additional requisites by the company
- Supervisor vs PhD in company

My PhD

- Topic: AI for radiotherapy quality assurance in clinical trials (experiments on humans) of head and neck cancers
- Supervised by a radiation oncologist (cancer doctor):
  - My 3rd semester internship supervisor during NucPhys
  - She offered the PhD after the internship
- Funded by two non-public organisations
  - Groupe d'Oncologie Radiothérapie Tête et Cou (Head and Neck Oncology and Radiotherapy Group): clinical trials and studies specific to head and neck cancers in France
  - AQUILAB by Coexya: products and services to aid radiotherapy quality assurance

Benefits of working with a company

Basically, the same as public, but a little bit more premium

- I get paid 2525 EUR before tax, while the public PhD was 2083 EUR when I started
  - ~1800 EUR net
  - My total monthly spending in Caen ~ 450 – 1000 EUR (gamma dist.)
  - Mine is fixed, while the public one is inflation-adjusted (2300 EUR in 2026)
- I have
  - Electric bike
  - 10 EUR lunch voucher per work day
  - Private retirement plan supported by the company
  - Private health care and insurance that could cover my immediate family
  - Limited but tax-free investment account
  - Childcare support

Additional requisites by the company

- I have two bosses with different interests
  - Company boss wants to make money
  - University boss wants to produce scientific value
- My contract requires a commercial product to be developed, as well as scientific outcomes
- My main contact is the university boss
- The company boss is more **professional**

- 28 days of holiday (almost half as some public PhDs)

Supervisor vs PhD in company

Your supervisor is **vital**

- **Do not think being able to work with a supervisor with a difficult character is a skill**

- Your supervisor must
  - Be easy to understand
  - Apply power tactfully
  - Not be super busy
- You can find out about a supervisor by:
  1. Search the articles with that supervisor https://hal.science
  2. Email the ex-student about the supervisor
  3. **Do not ignore the strong warnings**

Summary

- Financial benefits and resources of a PhD with a company is the same as a public one, but a little more premium
- PhD with a company serves a stakeholder with a commercial interest besides scientific values
- ~~Ocham's~~ Özgür's razor: of two competing PhDs with and without private funding, the PhD with the simplest supervisor must be preferred









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Thanks for your attention

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Any questions?