

An European partnership to improve the attractiveness of RTD careers and the conditions for mobility of researchers in Europe

Proposed Priority Actions

Considering the crucial role that research and technological development (RTD) policy plays in the framework of the **Lisbon strategy**, the importance of developing a European Research Area (ERA) and the attention that the European Council, in 22 and 23 March 2005, has given to the development of human capital in the framework of the mid-term review of the Lisbon strategy;

Considering the Conclusions of the Competitiveness Council of 18 April 2005 regarding the reinforcement of human resources in RTD in the European Research Area;

Considering the Conclusions of the Competitiveness Council of 23 November 2007 suggesting the development of common EU objectives in this field and defining actions to attain the level of human resources in RTD that are needed, and to increase the proportion of women among new researchers;

Considering the Commission's Communication of 23 May 2008 and the Competitiveness Council Conclusions of 26 September 2008 on "Improving careers and mobility: a European partnership for researchers" that proposes to mobilise Member States to common and complementary objectives regarding careers and the mobility of researchers;

Considering the need to increase the recruitment of young researchers, to facilitate their initial career development and to address their social rights;

Considering the need to strengthen European competitiveness at world level in respect to the attraction and retention in Europe of highly qualified human resources in science and technology;

Considering that PhD students (usually grant holders) may not benefit from minimum social protection under community law;

Considering the need to combine flexibility with employment security (the "flexicurity model") namely for young researchers and mobile researchers;

Considering the analysis and recommendations of the reference documents;

Ministers Biltgen and Gago, in response to the French Presidency request supported by all EU research ministers, wish to propose concrete political actions aiming at achieving immediate progress in this area. These actions are intended to address comprehensively the whole range of priorities identified as major common European objectives in the field of human resources for science and technology.

1) Increase the number and share of young people choosing to study science and technology related subjects

- Make known all employment opportunities for those holding a PhD, namely in the private sector;
- Promote the awareness of young people with respect to science and technology; improve science and technology education and help the development of science networks of schools, science teachers and researchers both nationally and internationally; support actions and institutions devoted to the promotion of scientific culture and the enlargement of the social constituency for scientific and technological development, namely science centres and science museums;
- Provide information services and school and professional guidance services capable of answering to the social needs regarding science and technology courses, promoting equal access to men and women to scientific and technical professions and giving information on scholarships and job opportunities provided by the private and the public sectors.

2) Increase the number and share of graduates enrolling in PhD training along with the diversification of PhD profiles and the reinforcement of quality assurance mechanisms

- Stimulate the increase of the number and proportion of PhD students, with due respect to the autonomy of universities;
- Increase the proportion of PhD fellowships awarded through open competition at national or international levels;
- Attract to Europe graduates from third countries for PhD training;
- Enlarge the perception of the newly acquired importance of PhD training to attaining high levels of professional competence and leadership beyond R&D careers, namely in administration, engineering, ICT, medicine, architecture and new interdisciplinary fields;
- Promote innovation and quality in PhD training, namely in conjunction with industry whenever appropriate.

3) Attracting to and retaining in European institutions a larger share of science and technology students and researchers from Europe and from the rest of the world.

- Give priority to high level groups and institutions, capable of attracting the best talents internationally (benchmark attractiveness);
- Significantly reduce bureaucracy of research public funding, namely by generalising the concession of research grants not submitted to a detailed external expenditure control;
- Improve and promote the mobility of students, researchers and teachers across institutions, sectors and borders, namely between academia and industry;

- Promote open, competitive and transparent recruitment of researchers, solely based on quality criteria;
- Facilitate dual careers and improve the conditions for the researcher's family and facilitate researchers partners' access to the labour market ;
- Ensure that a future revision of the Lisbon strategy 7th integrated guideline takes into account job and employment conditions of researchers, including the question of complementary pensions for the mobile researchers, in conjunction with the appropriate measures to be taken, at national level:

a) Improve job and employment conditions of researchers in order to make scientific careers more attractive and to increase the share of women in research

- invite member states to combine the employment mobility inherent to the development of a scientific career with an adequate social protection for all (principle of "flexicurity");
- Invite member states, funding agencies and employers to gradually generalise employment contracts for all PhD holders and to develop competitive career perspectives for researchers;
- Invite member states and funding agencies to complement the funding support given to the training of young researchers (namely grant holders and PhD students) with an appropriate social support, whenever needed;
- Invite member states and public research institutions to adopt policies allowing men and women to pursue scientific careers with an appropriate balance between professional and private life, contemplating adequate provisions regarding employment conditions and particularly maternity leave and parental child-rearing leave, namely for PhD students;
- Create a multi-institutional working group (Council of Europe, OECD, EC, Universities) including experts on social security, family and gender policies with a view to monitor and report on the evolution and impact of national policies regarding the participation of women in research and innovation professions.

b) Meet the needs of mobile researchers regarding social security and supplementary pensions:

- Consider the adoption of measures facilitating the transfer of supplementary pension rights for mobile researchers, taking advantage of the existing legal framework and by means of bilateral and multilateral agreements, before completion of the feasibility study on a possible pan-European pension fund for EU researchers;
- Invite the European Commission to examine the need for a specific Recommendation on easing the transfer of supplementary pension rights for researchers.

4) Ensure the legal, administrative and funding framework to encourage the implementation of the above actions:

- Invite member states to analyse the opportunity of using **structural funds**, namely the **European Social Fund**, to fund during a transition period, along with other existing financial instruments, researchers' career development programmes, namely the progressive conversion of post-doc scholarships into fixed term employment contracts;
- Invite future EU presidencies to organise a joint Competitiveness/EPSCO Council to debate the coordinated development of instruments of scientific policy and social policy in order to address European objectives regarding human resources for science and technology. Synergies with other Council configurations, namely with the Education, Youth and Culture Council, should also be taken into consideration.

This text is presented by the signatories, after the input and suggestions of their colleagues research ministers, on the occasion of the informal Competitiveness Council of May 4th 2009.

It is our understanding that Member States are already committed to undertaking action in this area through the National Action Plans which they are drawing up in response to the Council Conclusions agreed in 2007 and 2008. The issues covered in these action plans cover many of the points raised here and we would see the first priority in this area as being to ensure that the National Action Plans are effectively implemented, taking into account the priorities identified in this paper. We fully recognise that some of our issues lie firmly within the competence of Member States. To tackle these issues effectively we shall need to work closely together both at national and European level in engaging key stakeholders and we should take fully advantage of the processes of the Open Method of Coordination set up by the Lisbon Agenda.

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Reference documents

C(2003) 436 final from 18.7.2003: Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: the researchers in the European Research Area: a profession, multiple carers

Doc. 14636/03 from 12.11.2003: Council Resolution on the profession and the career of researchers within the European Research Area

Report of the High Level Group on Human Resources for Science and Technology in Europe, 2004: Increasing human resources for science and technology in Europe

C(2005) 576 final from 11.3.2005: Recommendation from the Commission regarding the European charter for researchers and the code of conduct for the recruitment of researchers

Doc. 8194/05 from 18.4.2005: Council Conclusions on reinforcing human resources in science and technology in the European Research Area

Doc. 14693/07 from 23.11.2007: Council Conclusions on the Future of Science and Technology in Europe

Doc. 10059/08 from 28.5.2008: Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: Better careers and more mobility – a European partnership for researchers

Doc. 10212/08 from 30.5.2008: Council Conclusions "Family-Friendly Scientific Careers: towards an integrated model"

Doc. 13671/08 from 30.9.2008: Council Conclusions on better careers and more mobility: a European partnership for researchers

Report from the ERA Expert Group 2008: Realising a single labour market for researchers