



2021
PORTUGAL.EU

INFORMAL MEETING OF MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR RESEARCH

3 FEBRUARY 2021

Belem Cultural Centre - CCB, LISBON

(online event)

Main topic: Promoting attractive research careers across Europe to help building a resilient recovery through a renewed, cohesive and inclusive European Research Area

Background note:

There is a wide consensus throughout Europe about the need to further enlarge, attract and retain the best talent for research, which has been emerging in terms of the need to **foster research careers and increase the professionalisation of research activity** in both public or private sectors, through an European approach. By “career” we mean how researchers are recruited, how they are assessed, rewarded and eventually promoted, which are their employment conditions and what are the conditions for their mobility across sectors and countries.

This is one of the priority areas for policy action set out in the recent Commission communication and Council conclusions to revitalise the European Research Area (ERA). This priority will be fully developed and implemented through the “ERA Forum for Transition” that is being set up with all Member States to act as the new R&I policy co-creation platform in Europe. One of the first outcomes expected in 2021 is a “Pact for Research and Innovation” that will be anchored in the values and principles that guide European research and innovation, in particular, as concerns the career of researchers. Overall, **Europe needs more scientists!**

Following the preliminary consultation process conducted in the context of the preparation of the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union in October-November 2020, as well as the *European Research and Innovation Advisory Committee* (ERAC) Workshop of December 15th on “labour market for research, skills, assessment and monitoring”, it should be clear that the **research careers debate** needs to be associated with **key policy discussions for Europe**. In particular, it can only be effectively addressed in terms of the need to **increase the level of public and private investment in R&D throughout all European regions**, as explicitly acknowledged in the EC communication of September 2020 and the Council conclusions of December 2020.

a. The evolving policy actions about research careers in Europe over the last 20 years:

Since the Council Resolution **establishing the European Research Area (ERA)**, of June **2000**, the career of researchers has been a key dimension of the ERA. In **2003** initial steps were taken with the Commission Communication on “Researchers in the European Research Area: One profession, multiple careers” and the Council Resolution of 10 November 2003 on “the profession and the career of researchers within the European Research Area (ERA)”. In **2004**, the high-level report on “Increasing human resources in science and technology for Europe” was clear in promoting the message that “Europe needs more scientists”, which was the theme of a Conference organized by the Commission in April 2004. However, the European dimension of research careers remains an issue, as careers remain fragile and quite different across research institutions and countries, still with many precarious situations throughout Europe.

In the meantime, the *European Charter for Researchers* and the *Code of Conduct for Researchers Recruitment* were adopted in **2005** and in **2009**, in response to the French Presidency request supported by EU research ministers, the Luxembourgish Minister François Biltgen and the late Portuguese Minister José Mariano Gago proposed concrete political actions aiming at achieving immediate progress in the area of human resources for science and technology focused on better careers and more mobility¹.

We should also recognize that progress in science was deemed as necessary as innovation, priming scientists to accept their societal responsibility, joining forces, building and organizing communities, and providing evidence-based advice to inform policy. An impressive outcome of these activities was the **establishment of the European Research Council (ERC) in 2007**. Today, the ERC has grown to be one of the flagships of the European Union (EU) Framework Programs (FPs), and funding talent researchers has become the engine that fuels innovation.

Then, in **2010**, the European Parliament approved a Resolution on “**Better Career and more mobility: A European Partnership for researchers**”. It offers the basis for a single European research career, as part of a single employment market for researchers. However, the European labour market for researchers is being developed at a very slow pace, with regards to the working and careers’ prospects of researchers.

In **2016**, the **Open Science Policy Platform** was established by the European Commission in order to contribute to the co-development and implementation of open science strategies throughout Europe. In **2020**, in its final report submitted to the Competitiveness Council, the Open Science Policy Platform identified the reform of the system used for assessing research, researchers and institutions towards a system that incentivises the practice of open science, as a priority.

Time seems ripe for moving ahead and both the Council and the Commission have expressed support to further develop the *European Competence Framework for Research Careers*, as well as the inclusion of research as a profession in the context of the European Classification ESCO. This would allow for comparable statistical data, as well as interoperability between sectors and countries. Recently, the Roadmap proposed in the context of the **Commission Communication of September 30, 2020**, on “**A new ERA for Research and Innovation**”², considers the development by 2024 of a new toolbox in support of researchers career development, as well as other related measures addressing brain circulation and intersectoral mobility.

b. Promoting new policy actions fostering European research careers:

It is under this context that the *European Research Council*, which has built a unique consensus across the research community in Europe, should continue to be strengthened, promoting recruitments following inter alia open, transparent, and merit-based principles and a better coordinated process across countries, including of training and career development systems.

¹ ST10003/09

² COM(2020) 628 final, 30.09.2020

Potential future avenues should also guarantee that EU, national, and local investments in performing training and career development systems are increased, to improve attractiveness of research careers across the entire ERA, thereby ensuring more **“multidirectional”** and **“balanced” brain circulation**, associated with **strengthened responsible research careers**. A stepwise approach to promote joint recruitments schemes and joint career development could be piloted in the “European Universities alliances”, as well as across research institutions at large in different EU member states. **The ultimate goal is to foster true European research careers.**

Mobilizing all stakeholders including national funding agencies and their cooperation with the European Commission is crucial to ensure these synergies, which may be further strengthened in close articulation with private foundations and the private sector in general.

The complexity of the issue in association with the need to continue promoting the autonomy of research and academic institutions, as well of the distinctive national public and private labour frameworks, implies that a special priority must be given to **the implementation of open observation, monitoring and reporting systems across Europe** about the framework conditions, working conditions and remuneration, **mobility “flows” and “stocks” of researchers**, as well as of career development systems and *research career paths* at institutional level. Although related conclusions have already been approved at the level of research ministers in the Competitiveness Council, such observation and reporting systems **remain to be implemented**. In particular, “pilot projects” could be tested at the level of the “European Universities Initiative”, as well as across higher education and research institutions from different EU member states, to foster European career development practices.

In addition, the debate should also consider the need to promote and mainstream a **renewed assessment system of researchers** and more **ambitious “European Charter for Researchers” and “Code of Conduct”** oriented to foster **European research career development practices applied for multiple career paths**. These processes should include clear recommendations for: i) **open observation, monitoring and reporting systems** across “European Universities”, as well as across research institutions at large throughout different EU member states; ii) improving **tenure track systems and strengthen team and career management and diversification** within academia; iii) **open science principles**, including the guarantee that career development is mainly associated with research publications freely available on journal websites, or through public repositories, as well as other open science practices, such as open access publishing, knowledge and data sharing, and open collaboration; (iv) expanding the **Charter and Code beyond academia**; and (v) a **governance mechanism** that provides incentives and raises visibility internationally.

It is in this context that the policy debate about **research careers across Europe** should be articulated with related issues across public and private systems, considering that careers are a national competence and preserving the autonomy of institutions. The following priority themes are suggested for the informal debate among research ministers:

- **Stimulating Research careers and recruitment of PhD talents in industry, SMEs and business firms:**
 - Guarantee that the recently established **taxonomy for sustainable financing**, as developed in close articulation with the EU New Green Deal, promotes innovative, sustainable and

regenerative businesses and entrepreneurial activities, **stimulating research careers in industry, SMEs and business firms, together with an increasing level and scope of business and private R&D;**

- Ensure **better matching of transversal skills with the needs of business** in search of highly skilled talents, to ensure better flow through of PhD talents, by mainstreaming involvement of business sector in research training and career development systems from the onset;
 - Optimise the collaboration across ecosystem actors to **leverage talent**, by using and sharing talent at a national/regional level and across employers.
- **Improve Research careers in Research Performing Organizations, Research and Technology Organisations and in Higher Education Institutions:**
- Focus on **early career researchers** and on improving employment and working conditions;
 - Improve employability of trainees by strengthening training and career development systems that involve non-academic sector from the onset, matching skills with needs, and increase career guidance;
 - Improve recruitment, rewarding and assessment systems towards a better appreciation and valuation **of research performance beyond purely bibliometric indicators** based on journal's impact factors, in order to encourage openness, sharing and collaboration as a means of increasing research quality and impact. Also improve the recruitment, rewarding and assessment systems towards a better balance between educational, research, managerial and entrepreneurial achievements, thus **fostering true European practices for recruitment and career development;**
 - Consider recommendations for a stepwise approach to **joint recruitment schemes**, piloted among "European Universities Alliances" and their surrounding ecosystem, and mainstreamed across higher education and research institutions at large, towards effective **"multidirectional" and "balanced" brain circulation** across Europe, associated with **strengthened responsible research careers;**
 - **European Universities alliances can be considered as "testbeds"** for interoperability and promotion of cooperation between Member States regarding European research career development practices;
 - Guarantee the **involvement of the RPOs, RTOs and HEIs** in the development, consolidation and refinement of the recently established **taxonomy for sustainable financing** to ensure scientific evidence is at the core of its criteria and to strengthen even more its level of ambition, robustness and impartiality. This will, in addition, promote the alignment of public funding with the objectives of the EU New Green Deal, contributing in greening public budget and harmonizing research careers in business firms and in RPOs, RTOs and HEIs.
- **Involvement of national funding agencies in cooperation with the EC:**
- Guarantee the implementation of **open observation, monitoring and reporting systems** across Europe about annual progress in framework conditions, working and employment environment and issues such as remuneration and social security, also on
- the annual **mobility "flows" and "stocks" of researchers**, as well as of **research career paths and progress in training and career development systems at institutional level;**
- Explore the possibility of **agreements among funding agencies and RTOs and HEIs on common principles for the assessment of research and researchers;**
 - Promote the **articulation of national programs with Horizon Europe** to support the enlargement of the recruitment, training and career development and rewarding of early

- career researchers, promoting an adequate coordination across countries following open, transparent and merit-based recruitment principles, and facilitating joint recruitments across institutions in different countries;
- Foster the necessary articulation among national agencies and EC towards a stepwise process leading to a **pan European job market for young researchers** based on a common framework for research assessment.
 - **Engage with private foundations to foster labour market opportunities for talent:**
 - Articulate public action at national and European levels in close cooperation with **philanthropy, through private foundations, to stimulate more and better research careers** in RPOs, RTOs and HEIs, with a focus on young researchers and to further improve recruitment, rewarding and assessment systems, as well as promoting and mainstreaming **European career development practices**;
 - Promote **value creation** by research institutions in close collaboration with private foundations, in particular spin offs, through adequate conditions including entrepreneurial skilling, incubators/accelerators, facilitating access to risk finance.
 - **Stimulating research careers and attention to scientific evidence in policy making:**
 - Ensure professional mobility between research and policy organizations (i.e., national and local government, public sector agencies) to reinforce the provision of scientific knowledge and expertise in support to policymaking (i.e., “science advice to policy”).

Overall, the successful evolution of the European Research Area should consider the necessary practices and frameworks fostering better research careers across business firms, Research and Technology Organisations and Higher Education Institutions, together with an increasing level and scope of business and public R&D.

The implementation of the renewed European Research Area, as set out in the EC communication of September 2020 and the Council conclusions of December 2020, and reaffirmed by ERAC, will be supported by an “**ERA Forum for Transition**” in which all Member States will participate.

Main question for debate in the informal meeting of ministers responsible for research:

How to further promote attractive research careers across Europe in public and private institutions in a renewed, performant, cohesive and inclusive ERA?

The informal debate among research ministers will be based on key policy discussions for Europe, in association with the need to **increase the level of public and private investment in R&D throughout Europe**. This policy debate should be articulated with related issues across public and private systems, namely:

- Research Careers in Research Performing Organizations (RPOs), Research and Technology Organizations (RTOs) and in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs): Which changes and clarification must be considered in a **renewed “Charter of Conduct”** to guide further **improvements in the recruitment, selection, rewarding and assessment systems of researchers across Europe, particularly for early career researchers that reward collaboration and openness to other researchers and to society?** How to ensure the **assessment of researchers is coherent with the assessment of research by funders and the assessment of institutions?** Which of these elements need to be incorporated in a **renewed “Charter and Code”**? Which are the potential steps to be considered to guide **joint recruitment schemes**, piloted in “European Universities” alliances and mainstreamed in higher education and research institutions at large, towards effective **“multidirectional” and “balanced” brain circulation** across Europe, associated with **strengthened responsible research careers**? Which actions can be carried out to ensure the activities of RTOs and HEIs are aligned with the themes of the European Green Deal, including fostering knowledge and researching on sustainable economic activities, as per the EU taxonomy for sustainable financing?
- Research Careers in Business firms: Which are the potential steps to be considered in the implementation of the recently established **taxonomy for sustainable financing**, as developed in close articulation with the EU New Green Deal, to help promoting innovative, sustainable and regenerative businesses and entrepreneurial activities, **stimulating research careers in existing business firms, or through business development (spin offs), together with an increasing level and scope of business R&D and improving uptake of highly skilled PhD talents by business in other professions?** In addition, how the diversification of career paths and intersectoral mobility should be promoted?
- On the role of national funding agencies and their cooperation with the EC: Which are the potential steps to be considered to guarantee the implementation of **open observation, monitoring and reporting systems** across Europe about annual progress in framework conditions, working and employment environment and issues such as remuneration and social security, also on the annual **mobility “flows” and “stocks” of researchers in the different disciplines and sectors**, as well as of **“research career paths” and progress in training and career development systems at institutional level**, in a way to help further promoting attractive research careers across Europe? In addition, how far the **articulation of national programs with Horizon Europe** or other EU initiatives should be further promoted?

- On the role of private foundations to foster research careers: How far public action at national and European levels should be **articulated with private foundations to stimulate more and better research careers** in RPOs, RTOs and HEIs?

PROGRAM

INFORMAL MEETING OF MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR RESEARCH

(online meeting, *Central European Time-CET*)

10:30

- **Welcome** address, **Manuel Heitor**, Minister for Science, Technology & Higher Education, Portugal
- **Introduction**, including the announcement of the “ERA Forum for Transition”, **Mariya Gabriel**, European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth

10:50-12:00 Brief keynotes (8 min each) - Research Careers in the broader EU policy:

- **Jean-Pierre Bourguignon**, President ad interim, European Research Council
- **Elvira Fortunato**, ERC Grantee, NOVA University Lisbon, Former Chief Scientific Advisor of the EC
- **Andreas Schleicher**, Director for Education and Skills, OECD and **Andrew Wyckoff**, Director for Science, Technology and Innovation, OCDE
- **Joost Korte**, Director-General, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, EC and **Jean-Eric Paquet**, Director-General, DG Research and Innovation, EC
- **Guy Villax**, CEO, Hovione, Portugal and Ireland
- **Patrick Prendergast**, Rector, Trinity College Dublin

12:00-13:30 Ministers Round table discussion

13:30 Closing remarks:

- **Mariya Gabriel**, European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth
- **Manuel Heitor**, Minister for Science, Technology & Higher Education, Portugal

13:45-14:00 Break

14:00 Working Lunch with Informal debate among ministers, the Commissioner and leaders of European private foundations

Key question: How far can we expect an increased articulation of private foundations with national agencies and the EC to foster a cohesive and inclusive ERA, promoting attractive research careers across Europe in coming years?

Moderator: **Lidia Borrell-Damián**, Secretary-General, Science Europe

Brief interventions (10 min each):

- **Angel Font**, Corporate Director of Research and Health, “la Caixa” Foundation, Spain and Chair of the European Foundation Centre
- **Carlos Moedas**, Member of the Board, Gulbenkian Foundation, Portugal
- **Georg Schütte**, Secretary General, Volkswagen Foundation, Germany

14.30-15:30 Informal Debate with Ministers and the Commissioner

15:30 End of the Informal Meeting

15:45 Press Conference

- **Manuel Heitor**, Minister for Science, Technology and Higher Education, Portugal
- **Mariya Gabriel**, European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth
- **Thomas Rachel**, Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister of Education and Research, Germany