

ERA Consultation Contribution (1): Attracting Non-EU Researchers to the European Research Area

On 13 September 2011, the European Research Area Committee (ERAC) held a stakeholder seminar to formally launch the public consultation on the European Research Area (ERA) [[LINK 1](#)]. On behalf of Eurodoc, Ludovic Garattini attended the meeting and called for recognising doctoral candidates as professionals. Eurodoc is deeply committed to the ongoing and especially the current pan-European efforts to complete the ERA by 2014.

As the first of several forthcoming Eurodoc contributions to the ERA consultation, this document will address the theme of 'attracting non-EU researchers to the ERA' by identifying obstacles still in place and how to best overcome them.

Commissioner Cecilia Malmström, on 13 September 2011, answered the query concerning the status and admission of non-EU junior researchers [[LINK 2](#)]. João Ferreira (European Parliament) launched this query in June 2011 [[LINK 3](#)] on the basis of Eurodoc's recommendations [[LINK 4](#)] that identified discrepancies between the two adopted Council directives (2004/114/EC and 2005/71/EC).

In the written response, Commissioner Malmström highlighted two aspects: (1) the exclusion of non-EU doctoral candidates from the scientific visa provisions (Directive 2005/71/EC) does not imply that they are not considered professionals; and (2) the admissions procedure under the student directive (Directive 2004/114/EC) is not stricter than that of the scientific visa.

Eurodoc welcomes the reaffirmation that doctoral candidates are indeed professionals and strongly support the Commission's continual efforts to establish pan-European recognition of this status. Yet, at the same time, we feel that there is a contradiction in the Commissioner's response stating that the treatments of non-EU doctoral candidates are similar, if not the same, in the two directives. The reason for this is because the scientific visa has been formally presented as the 'fast-track' procedure for admitting foreign researchers. Moreover, more favourable provisions – such as access to family reunification – have been adopted to attract non-EU researchers (Article 9 of Directive 2005/71/EC).

The Commission, in partnership with the European Parliament and the Council, should consider why it is in the EU's interest to exclude certain researchers, because of their nationalities, from accessing the provisions in the scientific visa directive. Eurodoc firmly states that this is highly discriminatory and contradicts the EU's own objectives as set out in the Innovation Union communication (commitment #30): 'By 2012, the European Union and its Member States should put into place integrated policies ... to attract a sufficient number of highly skilled third country nationals to stay in Europe'.

Eurodoc urges all EU institutions, working together with stakeholders, to amend these two directives in line with the Union's own objectives. Specifically, we call for recognising doctoral candidates, of all nationalities, as professionals at an early stage of a research career.

LINK 1: <http://scic.ec.europa.eu/str/index.php?sessionno=2417dc8af8570f274e6775d4d60496da>

LINK 2:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getAllAnswers.do?reference=E-2011-006278&language=EN>

LINK 3:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+WQ+E-2011-006278+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

LINK 4:

http://www.eurodoc.net/files/2010_Admission_Non-EU_Researchers_Recommendations.pdf